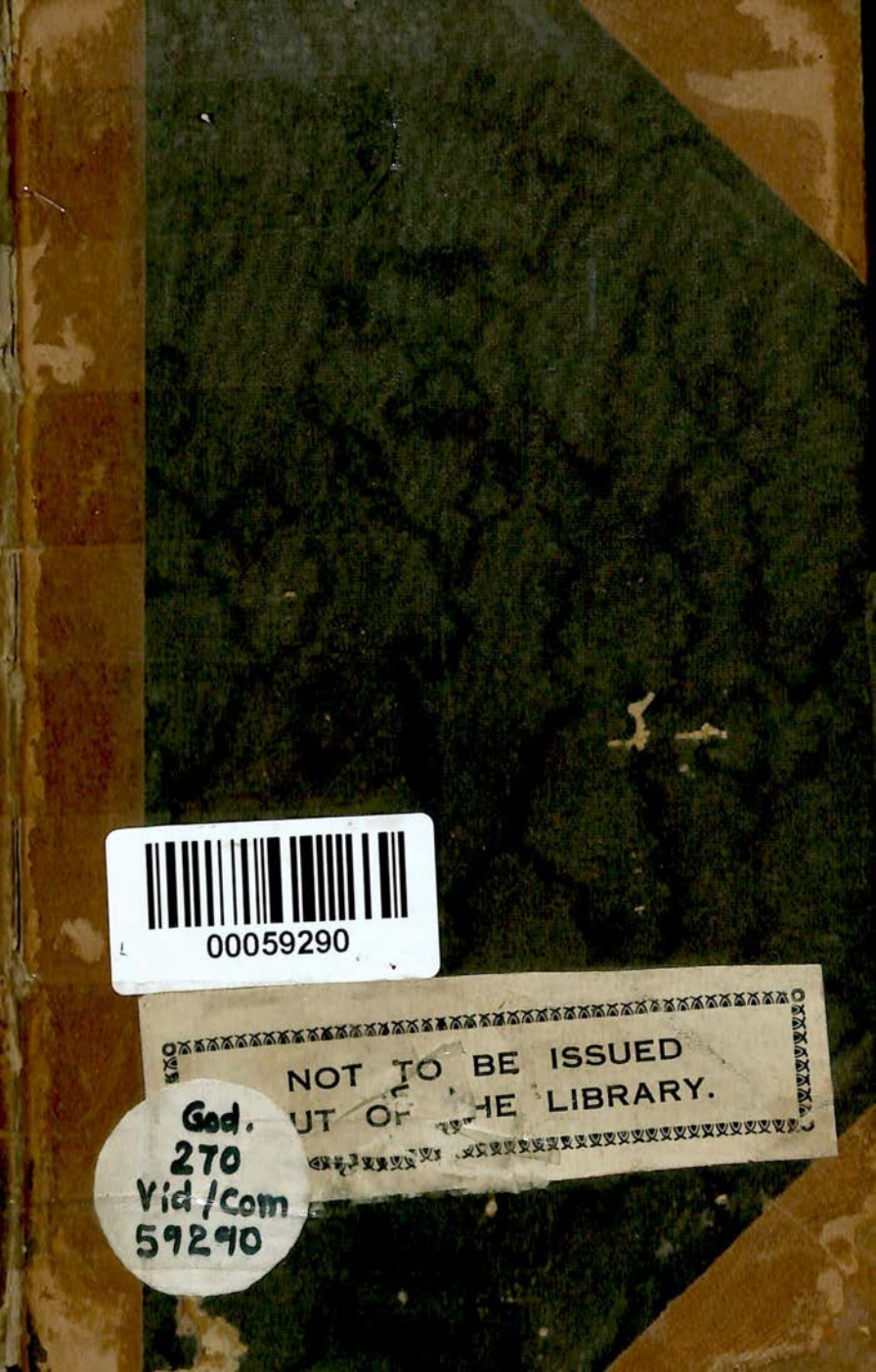
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COMMENTARIES

ON THE

AFFAIRS OF THE CHRISTIANS

BEFORE THE TIME OF

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

VOL. I.

Strahan and Preſton,
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COMMENTARIES

ON THE

AFFAIRS OF THE CHRISTIANS

BEFORE THE TIME OF

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT;

59290

OR,

AN ENLARGED VIEW OF

THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES.

ACCOMPANIED WITH

COPIOUS ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES AND REFERENCES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN OF

JOHN LAURENCE MOSHEIM, D.D.

LATE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GOTTINGEN.

By ROBERT STUDLEY VIDAL, Esq. F.S.A.

ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΟΚΙΜΑΖΕΤΕ· ΤΟ ΚΑΛΟΝ ΚΑΤΕΧΕΤΕ.

Il faut donc avoüer que quelques que puiſſent être les ſuites de l'examen, on doit s'y expoſer; et puis qu'il faut néceſſairement que nous jugions, que l'on doit acquerir les lumieres néceſſaires pour juger ſolidement.

LE CLERC.

6.4.2

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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TO

THE MOST REVEREND

CHARLES,

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

PRIMATE OF ALL ENGLAND, AND METROPOLITAN,

&c. &c. &c.

THE FOLLOWING TRANSLATION

IS

(WITH HIS GRACE'S PERMISSION)

MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S MOST OBLIGED

AND VERY OBEDIENT SERVANT,

ROBERT STUDLEY VIDAL.

THE

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE name of Dr. Moſheim ranks ſo deſervedly high in the republic of Letters, that no additional recommendation, it is preſumed, can be wanting to enſure the attention of the learned to any work that may come forth under its ſanction.—As a writer of Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory this profound and judicious ſcholar may be ſaid to ſtand without a competitor. The ſubject was congenial to his mind, and whether we conſider the talents he poſſeſſed, or the peculiar judgment and felicity with which he applied them to the elucidation of this department of Literature, his merit is alike conſpicuous, and can never be too highly appreciated or extolled.

Amongſt other works of acknowledged ingenuity and erudition which he publiſhed on this intereſting and important ſubject, the one which we now venture to ſubmit to the Public, for the firſt time in an Engliſh tranſlation, appears to have engaged a very conſiderable portion of his attention and pains.

That vaſt fund of curious and important matter which, in the ſhape of Notes, will be found to conſtitute its chief bulk, could not poſſibly have been within the reach of any common degree of exertion: on the contrary, we offer it with no ſmall confidence to the intelligent Reader as an illuſtrious memorial of thoſe laborious and extenſive reſearches, and that ſevere courſe of ſtudy, to which it is well known that Dr. Moſheim devoted himſelf for the purpoſe of illuſtrating the hiſtory of Chriſtianity, and bringing it more within the graſp of ordinary diligence and apprehenſion.

The maſterly and highly-valuable diſquiſitions which are to be met with in theſe Notes, reſpecting many abſtruſe and intricate points connected with the riſe and firſt eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, appear to have been founded on a moſt comprehenſive and deliberate re-examination of the Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory of the firſt ages, originally undertaken by the learned Author with a view to an enlarged edition of his Elements of Chriſtian Hiſtory, a work of high and eſtabliſhed reputation, and of which the Engliſh reader long ſince received a tranſlation from the pen of the late learned Dr. Archibald Maclaine.—But as the nature and deſign of that work could not well be brought to admit of any thing like a detailed examination or ſatisfactory diſcuſſion of ſeveral topics

topics on which the curiosity of an intelligent and inquisitive Reader might very naturally be excited, the illustrious Author appears to have conceived that it would be yielding no unacceptable service to the literary world for him to write a set of Commentaries on a plan which, touching but lightly on subjects that had been previously well illustrated, should have an express reference to the investigation of such interesting particulars as had not been satisfactorily discussed either in his own Institutes or in the works of any other writer.

Of these projected Commentaries it is to be lamented that Dr. Mosheim lived only to publish a portion; but it will, we presume, be productive of no small degree of satisfaction to the Reader, to be apprised that the Work is complete as far as it goes, and embraces the entire history of somewhat more than the first three centuries; a period perhaps, beyond all others, replete with matter of the highest import to the right understanding of the genuine, unsophisticated principles of the Christian Religion.

Of the motives by which the Translator was induced to undertake the rendering of this Work into English, it can be necessary to say but little. It will probably be thought sufficient for him to remark, that the original Work having been

long held in the higheſt eſtimation by thoſe the beſt qualified to judge of it's merits *, it was imagined that an attempt to extend, in ſome meaſure, the ſphere of its utility through the medium of an Engliſh tranſlation, would at leaſt be viewed with indulgence, and might poſſibly be rewarded with approbation by a liberal and enlightened Public.—It may however, farther be obſerved, that the Book had become exceedingly ſcarce, inſomuch that although it was not unfrequently ſought after with the moſt eager aſſiduity, a copy was rarely to be procured even for any price.

In what manner the undertaking has been executed, it will be for others to determine, and he will therefore, as to this point, content himſelf with merely ſtating that he has, throughout the whole Work, endeavoured to exhibit the ſenſe of his original with the moſt ſcrupulous fidelity, but at the ſame time without ſo cloſely

* Amongſt the more recent teſtimonies in favour of this Work, the Public will, we are perſuaded, attach no inconſiderable degree of weight to that of the Rev. Henry Kett, B.D. ſenior Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford; who includes theſe Commentaries in the Liſt of Books recommended at the end of his "Elements of General Knowledge," (vol. ii. p. 31.) and adds, "It is much to be regretted that this excellent Work has never been tranſlated into Engliſh, as it would ſo well fill up the defective account of the three firſt centuries in the Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory."

purſuing

purſuing that object as to ſink the ſpirit of his Author in a tame and ſervile tranſlation.

In ſubmitting this tranſlation to the judgment of the Public, it would be unbecoming for him not to feel a conſiderable degree of diffidence, if not of apprehenſion.—He has endeavoured indeed to render it as perfect as he was able, but he is not ſo much the dupe of vain conceit as to imagine that it will be found altogether free from inaccuracies, or unblemiſhed by miſtakes.—There is a proper confidence, however, which belongs to every one who, in making an attempt like the preſent, is not conſcious of having undertaken that to which he ought to have known himſelf to be unequal; and the Tranſlator truſts, that it will not be thought exceeding the juſt limits of that confidence, for him to expreſs a hope that his labours will not be pronounced either diſcreditable to himſelf or injurious to the reputation of that illuſtrious Author, to whom it has been throughout his moſt anxious wiſh and intention to do juſtice.

ROBERT STUDLEY VIDAL.

17th Nov. 1812.

*** N. B. The Tranſlator had it at one time in contemplation to have ſubjoined, as he went on, a few remarks of his own on certain points that either appeared to ſolicit further inveſtigation, or on which additional light has been thrown ſince

ſince the time when Dr. Moſheim wrote; but on further conſideration (and more particularly on account of the very great extent to which the page is already occupied with annotation,) he has been induced to abandon that deſign, and to reſerve what obſervations he may have to offer of his own until the concluſion of the work; when, ſhould the Public appear diſpoſed to regard his labours with an indulgent eye, and other circumſtances not wear a diſcouraging aſpect, it is his intention to bring them forward in a ſupplemental Volume, accompanied with a Life of Moſheim, a Catalogue of his numerous Publications, and a Tranſlation of ſome of his moſt approved Diſſertations and ſmaller pieces.——To pledge himſelf to any thing beyond this at preſent, might perhaps be thought to ſavour ſomewhat of preſumption; but he truſts that he ſhall not incur the imputation of arrogance, by adding that there is one other Undertaking, in the way of tranſlation, to which he has occaſionally ventured to direct his attention, and which, ſhould it ever be in his power to accompliſh, will put the Engliſh Reader in poſſeſſion of a Work, that in the original Latin has long been conſidered as an ineſtimable Appendage to one of the nobleſt productions of the human mind: he alludes to Dr. Moſheim's Notes on Cudworth's Intellectual Syſtem of the Univerſe.

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Page 31, laſt line, for *Itenere*, read *Itinere*.
—— 36, line 6. for *or* "*God*," read *or* "*of God*."
—— 49, — 12. for *Sacca*, read *Saccas*.
—— 72, — 27. for *Sudducees*, read *Sadducees*.
—— 77, — 31. for *Indicalum*, read *Indiculum*.
—— 184, — 29, for *Cruely*, read *Cruelty*.
Paſſim, — for *Intrinſically*, read *Intrinſecally*.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE work which I here offer to the public, owes its origin rather to a fortuitous concurrence of circumſtances, than to any regular premeditated deſign. My *Inſtitutes of Chriſtian Hiſtory* having met with ſuch a rapid ſale, that every copy was diſpoſed of within four years; the worthy perſon, at whoſe expence they were printed, urged me to publiſh an enlarged and improved edition of them. In compliance with his wiſhes, I ſat down to a reviſion of the work; and having compared its contents with the original ancient authorities, together with what elſe was to be met with on the ſubject in the writings of the learned, and alſo with ſuch notes and obſervations as a daily courſe of reading and reflection had enabled me to make, I perceived, or rather my attention was again caught by what for many years before I had perceived to be the caſe, that in the hiſtory of Chriſtian affairs, ſome things had been almoſt entirely omitted, others not properly repreſented, and not a few, either

from negligence, a partial view of the ſubject, or the placing of too great a reliance on the induſtry of others, altogether miſconceived.

Whatever remarks of this kind preſented themſelves, were carefully minuted down, with a view to render the propoſed fourth edition of my book both more complete and of greater utility than the preceding ones. Proceeding conſtantly in this way, my collection of notes at length acquired no inconſiderable degree of bulk; and the more frequently I conſidered them, the more diſpoſed I felt, (for we naturally conceive a regard for what has coſt us ſome pains,) to believe them not wholly unworthy of being preſerved. In the courſe of time, a thought ſuggeſted itſelf to me of writing a ſet of Commentaries on Chriſtian affairs, upon a different ſcale; reducing my obſervations within a narrower compaſs on ſuch topics as had been ſufficiently treated of by others, and, at the ſame time, giving a more copious and ſatisfactory diſcuſſion of thoſe matters which a long courſe of ſtudy and attention had rendered more particularly familiar to me, and reſpecting which I had obtained a preciſe and accurate knowledge. I mentioned this idea to the perſon above ſpoken of, who had ſubmitted to me the propoſal of publiſhing an enlarged edition of my former ſmall work, and it met with his approbation: but, as the undertaking was of ſome magnitude, we agreed that the work ſhould be

publiſhed

publiſhed in ſeparate parts; taking care, however, that each diviſion might be ſo far complete in itſelf as not to have the appearance of being disjointed, or awkwardly torn off from the reſt. The work was accordingly taken up by me without delay; and I have now to expreſs my hope, that what is here offered to the public as the firſt part, (but which may be conſidered as forming a work of itſelf,) may be productive of the wiſhed-for beneficial effects. If the Supreme Diſpoſer of human affairs prolong my days, and grant me a continuance of my health and faculties, the others will follow in regular ſucceſſion. Indeed the next, conſiſting of *Commentaries on the affairs of the Chriſtians under the family of Conſtantine*, may be expected within a very ſhort period: the materials have been long ſince collected and arranged, and only wait for the printer.

Since the ſubject of the following work has been treated of by many before me, it is impoſſible but that my book ſhould contain ſeveral things in common with theirs; but notwithſtanding this, it will be found, both in reſpect of the matter, as well as of the manner of handling it, to differ conſiderably from other works of a ſimilar kind. With regard to the form or order of narration, I have endeavoured to ſteer a middle courſe, having neither arranged my materials after the plan of annals, nor yet according

to that which I followed in my ſmaller hiſtory, and which many prefer, of diſtributing the tranſactions of each century under certain general titles. Each of theſe modes has its advantages: the latter, however, is attended with this inconvenience, that it frequently ſeparates things the moſt cloſely connected; and by thus interrupting the chain of hiſtory, renders it difficult for the reader to trace the progreſs of events from their beginning to their cloſe, or to connect ſome of the greater revolutions and changes with the cauſes which produced them. My object, therefore, has been to unite, as far as poſſible, the advantages of both theſe methods, by managing my ſubject ſo as that, whilſt every proper attention was paid to the order of time, a due regard ſhould likewiſe be had to the connecting of events with their cauſes, and the keeping diſtinct things which had no relation to each other. I truſt that both the memory and the judgment of the reader may be aſſiſted by this mode of arrangement, and that it will be found inſtrumental in developing the more remote cauſes of thoſe changes which have occaſionally taken place in the Chriſtian commonwealth.

For the matter which forms the baſis of this work, I have principally depended on ſuch original monuments of antiquity as have eſcaped the ravages of time. I have not, indeed, neglected to avail myſelf of whatever aſſiſtance could be drawn

drawn from thoſe writers of a more recent date, whoſe merits have given them an authority with the public, and ſtamped a celebrity of character on their works; but, at the ſame time, it has been my care to follow none of them without conſulting, and, as far as I was able, examining with attention and aſſiduity, the original ſources themſelves from whence the authors derived, or appeared to have derived, their information. That the reader may the more readily judge of my caution and fidelity in this reſpect, I have, in every caſe where doubts might ariſe on a point of any moment, ſubjoined the teſtimony of theſe ancient writers in their own words. I have not occupied myſelf in diſcuſſing the merits of the different opinions, explanations, and conjectures that are to be met with in the writings of the learned, unleſs through neceſſity, or where the antiquity and weight of the opinions themſelves, or the abilities and high reputation of the authors by whom they were maintained, appeared to demand it. In treating of Chriſtian affairs, it has been my ſtudy rather to recount what, upon the faith of ancient writers, I conſider as the ſimple fact, than to entangle myſelf with any particular opinions that may have been entertained on the ſubject.

I have intentionally avoided entering into any diſcuſſion reſpecting matters of a minute and trifling kind; ſuch, for inſtance, as the birth-

place of Simon, Valentine, and others, the particular year in which any ſect ſprung up, the exact ſituation of places, obſolete and obſcure words and phraſes, and the like. For, not to ſay any thing of the uncertainty with which things of this ſort muſt in a great meaſure remain enveloped, in ſpite of every endeavour that might be uſed to extricate them, it would neither be conſiſtent with propriety, nor attended with the promiſe of any ſort of benefit, to occupy the attention with them in a hiſtory like the preſent, of the practical ſpecies, or that which applies itſelf to the immediate and moſt important purpoſes of life; although, in another place, the conſideration of them might probably be productive both of pleaſure and utility. Beſides, there are many works already extant, in which thoſe who have a taſte for diſquiſitions of this kind may meet with the moſt ample gratification.

In the following Commentaries, the hiſtory of the firſt century will be found leſs copious than that of the ſucceeding ones: indeed, in ſome inſtances, the reader will meet with ſcarcely any thing more than a mere ſummary notice of the fact. To account for this, it need only be known, that an enlarged edition of my *Inſtitutes of the Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory of the firſt Age*, is already before the public, in which, whoever ſhall be deſirous of obtaining further information on any topic which is but ſlightly noticed in the preſent

preſent work, may find it treated of expreſsly and more at large. I could not by any means, conſiſtently with the plan of theſe Commentaries, entirely paſs over the firſt century, ſince it was my deſign that they ſhould comprehend an univerſal hiſtory of eccleſiaſtical affairs from the commencement of the Chriſtian era to the time of Conſtantine the Great, written upon a different ſcale from that of my former work, and diſpoſed after a new method: but, on the other hand, common juſtice appeared to demand that I ſhould not wholly diſregard the intereſts of thoſe who had purchaſed my above-mentioned enlarged Elementary Hiſtory of the firſt Age; nor could I in any ſhape reconcile it with the principles of fairneſs and honeſty, to ſend out into the world a mere tranſcript or repetition of what was already before it under a different title. I therefore determined to follow a middle line of conduct, confining my account of the tranſactions of the firſt century within much narrower limits than I had preſcribed to myſelf in my former work, but, at the ſame time, availing myſelf of the preſent opportunity to make ſeveral corrections in the hiſtory of that period, and alſo to enrich it with ſome additional matter. In fact, the two works will be found to aſſiſt and reflect mutual light on each other. The enlarged edition of my Inſtitutes will ſupply the reader with a more ample and minute inveſtigation of ſuch

particulars relating to the hiſtory of the firſt century, as are but briefly touched on in the following work; whilſt, on the other hand, by a reference to theſe Commentaries, light will be obtained on ſuch matters as are not treated of with ſufficient perſpicuity in the Inſtitutes, ſome partial omiſſions in that work will be ſupplied, and the means be furniſhed for correcting ſome inaccuracies which found their way into it through inadvertence, or want of better information. If, in the following work, any particulars, hitherto unknown, be brought to light; their due weight be given to any circumſtances, hitherto paſſed over without proper attention; any points, hitherto but imperfectly ſupported by proofs, or not explained with ſufficient perſpicuity, be ſubſtantiated, and rendered eaſy of apprehenſion, (and unleſs I have been led to form too favourable an eſtimate of my reading, my memory, and my judgment, the book will be found to have ſome pretenſions of this ſort,) it will better accord with my feelings to leave theſe things to be noticed by the intelligent reader in the courſe of his progreſs, than for me to anticipate his diſcernment, by pointing them out in this place.

INTRODUCTION.

IT appears to me deſirable, (and the opinion is not, I think, built upon ſlight grounds,) that before we enter on the hiſtory of the origin and progreſs of Chriſtianity, a ſummary view ſhould be taken of the age in which the Goſpel Diſpenſation had its commencement. For in no other way than by a reference to the manners and opinions of thoſe times, can we obtain any inſight into the reaſons and cauſes of many things which happened to the early Chriſtians, or form a proper judgment of ſeveral of their primary regulations and inſtitutions; nor can we know juſtly how to appreciate the great extent of thoſe benefits which CHRIST hath procured for mankind, unleſs we previouſly acquaint ourſelves with the forlorn and miſerable condition of the human race before the Redeemer's advent. By way of introduction, therefore, to the following work, we ſhall, in the firſt place, preſent the reader with a ſketch of the general ſtate of the world, at the time of our SAVIOUR's birth; and then call his attention particularly to the civil and religious economy of the Jewiſh nation, at the ſame intereſting period.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Of the Civil, Religious, and Literary State of the World in general, at the Time of Chriſt's Birth.

INTROD. CHAP. I.

State of the Roman Empire.

I. AT the time when the SON of GOD, having taken upon himſelf our nature, was born in the land of Judea, the greateſt part of the habitable earth was ſubject to the ſenate and people of Rome, who uſually committed the care and adminiſtration of thoſe provinces which were removed to any conſiderable diſtance from the imperial city, to temporary governors or preſidents ſent from Rome; or if in any of them the ancient form of government was permitted to be retained, gave it ſuch a modification, and cloathed it with ſo many reſtrictions, as effectually ſecured to the Roman ſtate a ſupreme and controuling dominion. Although the appearance, or rather the ſhadow of freedom and dignity yet remained with the ſenate and people of Rome, the reality had long been loſt to them; all power having centred in the one CÆSAR AUGUSTUS, who was graced with the titles of Emperor, High Prieſt, Cenſor, Tribune of the People, and Proconſul, and inveſted with every office of the ſtate that carried with it any thing either of majeſty or authority [*a*].

[*a*] Auguſtin Campianus, *de Officio et Poteſtate Magiſtratuum Romanorum, et Juriſdictione*, lib. i. cap. i. § 2. p. 3. Edit. Genev. 1725, in 4to.

II. Were

Defects of the Roman government.

II. Were we to form our judgment of the Roman government from the principles of its conſtitution, or the nature of its laws, we muſt conſider it as mild and moderate [*b*]. But whatever promiſe of happineſs the equitable ſpirit of the original ſyſtem might hold out to the people, it was conſtantly checked and counteracted by a variety of cauſes, and particularly by the rapacity and diſhoneſty of the publicans, to whom the collection of the public revenue was entruſted [*c*]; the unbounded avarice of the governors of provinces to increaſe their private wealth; and the inſatiable cupidity of the people at large, which diſplayed itſelf not merely in the tenacity with which they maintained every part of their conqueſts, but alſo in a conſtant readineſs to ſeize all opportunities of extending the bounds of the empire. Whilſt, on the one hand, this inceſſant thirſt after dominion gave riſe to continual wars, and rendered it neceſſary conſtantly to burthen the inhabitants of the provinces with the maintenance of a formidable military force, a thing in itſelf doubtleſs ſufficiently grievous, the greedy publicans and governors were, on the other hand, fleecing the people of the reſidue of their property, by the moſt ſhameful and iniquitous pecuniary exactions.

Benefits ariſing out of the Roman government.

III. It muſt not, however, be overlooked, that the bringing of ſo many nations into ſubjection under one people, or rather under one man,

[*b*] See a diſcourſe by the very ingenious Mr. Walter Moyle, entitled, *An Eſſay upon the Conſtitution of the Roman Government*, publiſhed amongſt his poſthumous works, vol. i. p. 1-48. Lond. 1726. 8vo. Giannone, *Hiſtoire Civile du Royaume de Naples*, vol. i. p. 3, 4, et ſeq. Scip. Maffei, *Verona Illuſtrata*, lib. ii. p. 65.

[*c*] See Pet. Burmannus, *de Vectigalibus Populi Romani*, cap. ix. p. 123, et ſeq.

was

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was productive of many and great advantages. For, 1ſt, By means of this, the people of various regions, alike ſtrangers to each other's language, manners, and laws, were aſſociated together in the bond of amity, and invited to reciprocal intercourſe. 2dly, By Roman munificence, which ſhrank from no expence to render the public ways commodious, an eaſy and ready acceſs was given to parts the moſt diſtant and remote [*d*]. 3dly, Men that had hitherto known no other rules of action, no other modes of life, than thoſe of ſavage and uncultivated nature, had now the model of a poliſhed nation ſet before their eyes, and were gradually inſtructed by their conquerors to form themſelves after it. 4thly, Literature and the arts, with the ſtudy of humanity and philoſophy, became generally diffuſed, and the cultivation of them extended even to countries that previouſly had formed no other ſcale by which to eſtimate the dignity of man, than that of corporeal vigour, or muſcular ſtrength.

Since all theſe things materially contributed to facilitate the propagation of the goſpel by our Saviour's apoſtles, and enabled them the more eaſily to impreſs men's minds with the doctrines of the true religion, we cannot but readily accord in opinion with thoſe who maintain, that the Son of God could not have revealed himſelf to man-

[*d*] See a learned work of Nicol. Bergier concerning the Roman public ways, entitled, *Hiſtoire des grands Chemins de l'Empire Romain*, Bruſſels, 1728, in 4to. Alſo a treatiſe by the learned Everard Otto, *de Tutela Viarum publicarum*, p. ii. p. 314. Many other highly reſpectable authors have alſo either profeſſedly, or incidentally, treated of this ſubject, and pointed out the great care and induſtry of the Romans, to render the channels of communication both by ſea and land, throughout every part of the empire, ſafe, eaſy, and expeditious.

kind

kind at a more favourable or auſpicious ſeaſon [*e*].

Peace prevails nearly throughout the world.

IV. Thoſe inteſtine diſcords, by which the Roman ſtate had long been diſtracted and ravaged, were terminated in the acquiſition of the ſovereign power by Auguſtus; and the wars with foreign ſtates continued no longer to be undertaken with the accuſtomed precipitancy, or proſecuted with that degree of ardour by which they had been formerly characteriſed. Although, therefore, we cannot ſubſcribe to the opinion of thoſe writers, who, being led into a miſtake by Oroſius, have aſſerted, that at the time of our Saviour's birth the temple of Janus was ſhut [*f*], and every part of the Roman empire wrapt in a profound peace, it muſt nevertheleſs unqueſtionably be admitted, that if the period of which we are ſpeaking, be brought into compariſon with antecedent times, it may juſtly be termed the age of peace and tranquillity. Indeed, had not ſuch been the ſtate of things, it would have been almoſt impoſſible, (as St. Paul pretty plainly intimates [*g*],) for our Saviour's apoſtles to have executed with effect, the important commiſſion to mankind with which they were entruſted.

State of other nations.

V. Our knowledge of the ſtate of any of thoſe nations which were ſituated beyond the confines

[*e*] Amongſt the early fathers of Chriſtianity, we may refer to Origen, who particularly notices this circumſtance in the ſecond book of his Reply to Celſus, p. 79. edit. Cantab. In after-times, we find it adverted to by ſeveral of thoſe who have entered the liſts againſt the adverſaries of revealed religion.

[*f*] Maſſon has given us a very maſterly examination of the ancient opinion reſpecting the temple of Janus, in his *Templum Jani Chriſto naſcente reſeratum*, publiſhed at Roterdam, 1706, in 8vo.

[*g*] 1 Tim. ii. 2.

of

INTROD. CHAP. I.

of the Roman empire, is of neceſſity very imperfect and obſcure, owing to the paucity of their hiſtorical monuments and writers. We obtain, however, light ſufficient to perceive that, the eaſtern nations were diſtinguiſhed by a low and ſervile ſpirit, prone to ſlavery and every other ſpecies of abject humiliation, whilſt thoſe towards the north prided themſelves in cheriſhing a warlike and ſavage diſpoſition, that ſcorned even the reſtraint of a fixed habitation, and placed its chief gratification in the liberty of roaming at large through ſcenes of devaſtation, blood, and ſlaughter. A ſoft and feeble conſtitution both of body and mind, with powers barely adequate to the cultivation of the arts of peace, and chiefly exerciſed in miniſtering at the ſhrine of voluptuous gratification, may be conſidered as the characteriſtic trait of the former; a robuſt and vigorous corporeal frame, animated with a glowing ſpirit, that looked with contempt on life, and every thing by which its cares are ſoothed, and the calamities to which it is obnoxious alleviated, that of the latter [*b*].

All devoted to ſuperſtition and polytheiſm.

VI. The minds of the people inhabiting theſe various countries, were fettered and held in melancholy bondage, by ſuperſtitions of the moſt abominable and degrading nature. At the command of their prieſts, who were inveſted with an authority bordering on deſpotiſm, theſe deluded beings ſhrank from no ſpecies of mental debaſement whatever, but were ready to plunge headlong into every extravagance of the moſt abſurd

[*b*] *Ferè itaque imperia penès eos fuere populos, qui mitiore cælo utuntur: in frigora, ſeptemtrionemque vergentibus immanſueta ingenia ſunt, ut ait poeta, ſuuque ſimillima cælo,* Seneca, *de Ira,* lib. ii. cap. xvi. p. 36. tom. i. opp. edit. Gronov.

and

and monſtrous credulity. In ſaying this, we would not be underſtood to mean that the ſenſe of a ſupreme deity, from whom all things had their origin, and whoſe decrees regulate the univerſe, had become entirely extinct; but, that the number of thoſe who endeavoured by meditation and prayer to elevate their minds to a juſt conception of his nature and attributes, and to worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth, was comparatively inſignificant, and of no account. Throughout every nation, a general belief prevailed, that all things were ſubordinate to an aſſociation of powerful ſpirits, who were called Gods, and whom it was incumbent on every one who wiſhed for a happy and proſperous courſe of life to worſhip and conciliate. One of theſe gods was ſuppoſed to excel the reſt in dignity, and to poſſeſs a ſupereminent authority, by which the taſks or offices of the inferior ones were allotted, and the whole of the aſſembly, in a certain degree, directed and governed. His rule, however, was not conceived to be by any means arbitrary; neither was it imagined that he could ſo far invade the provinces of the others, as to interfere with their particular functions; and hence it was deemed neceſſary for thoſe who would ſecure the favour of Heaven, religiouſly to cultivate the patronage of every ſeparate deity, and aſſiduouſly to pay that homage to each of them which was reſpectively their due.

The ſame deities, however, not worſhipped by all.

VII. Every nation, however, worſhipped not the ſame gods, but each had its peculiar deities, differing from thoſe of other countries, not only in their names, but in their nature, their attributes, their actions, and many other reſpects; and it is an highly erroneous ſuppoſition which ſome have adopted, that the gods of Greece and

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Rome were the ſame with thoſe which were worſhipped by the Germans, the Syrians, the Arabians, the Perſians, the Egyptians, and others [*i*]. Pride and ignorance, amongſt other motives, and poſſibly ſomething of a ſimilarity which might be perceptible between their own ſtatues and images and thoſe which they found in other countries, induced the Greeks and Romans to pretend that, the gods which they acknowledged, were equally reverenced in every other part of the world. In ſupport of this identity, they accuſtomed themſelves to apply the names of their own divinities to thoſe of foreign ſtates; and the opinion of its exiſtence having found abettors in every ſucceeding age, even down to our own times, the preſs has ſwarmed with an hoſt of idle diſquiſitions on the ſubject, by which the hiſtory of ancient religions, inſtead of being elucidated, has been involved in a degree of uncertainty, confuſion, and obſcurity, that is ſcarcely to be deſcribed. It might probably be the caſe with moſt nations, that the gods of other countries were held in a ſort of ſecondary reverence, and perhaps in ſome inſtances privately worſhipped; but of this fact we are certain, that to neglect or diſparage the eſtabliſhed worſhip of the ſtate, was always conſidered as an offence of the deepeſt and moſt heinous nature.

This diverſity of religions did not generate wars.

VIII. This diverſity of gods, and of religious worſhip, was never known to generate animoſity,

[*i*] Athanaſius has particularly noticed this in his *Oratio contra Gentes*, tom. i. opp. p. 25. It has alſo been pointed out by ſeveral modern writers, particularly by Le Clerc in his *Ars Critica*, p. ii. ſect. 1. cap. xiii. § 11. p. 280.; and in his *Bibliotheque Choiſie*, tom. vii. p. 84. Alſo by Dr. Warburton, in his *Divine Legation of Moſes*, vol. ii. p. 233, et ſeq.

or kindle the flames of war between nations, except in the one ſolitary inſtance of the Egyptians: and conſiderable doubts may be entertained, whether even in this caſe a difference of religion alone was the cauſe of ſtrife [*k*]. Each nation readily conceded to others the right of forming their own opinions, and judging for themſelves, in matters of religious concern; and left them, both in the choice of their deities, and their mode of worſhipping them, to be guided, by whatever principles they might think proper to adopt. Although this may appear at firſt ſight to many as a very extraordinary and unaccountable circumſtance, yet, when it is examined, there will be found nothing in it that ſhould excite either our wonder or ſurpriſe [*l*].

Thoſe who were accuſtomed to regard this world in the light of a large commonwealth, divided into ſeveral diſtricts, over each of which a certain

[*k*] That the Egyptians were at times engaged amongſt themſelves in religious wars, *i. e.* in wars undertaken on account of their gods and their religion, is clear from many paſſages in ancient authors, the principal of which are brought into one view by Pignorius, in his *Expoſitio Menſæ Iſiacæ*, p. 41, et ſeq. But if by a religious war be meant that which is undertaken by a nation or people in defence of their religion, or with a view to make another nation or people renounce the religion of their anceſtors and adopt theirs, in ſuch caſe I do not ſee that thoſe wars of the Egyptians can with any propriety be termed religious ones. The Egyptians engaged in wars with their neighbours, not with a view to make them change their religion, but for the purpoſe of revenging the injuries that had been done to certain animals which they themſelves held ſacred. The fact was, that animals, which in ſome of the provinces of Egypt were reverenced as gods, were in others conſidered as noxious, and killed whenever they could be found: and hence aroſe the quarrels and warfare to which we allude.

[*l*] See Shafteſbury's *Characteriſtics*, paſſim, vol. ii. p. 166. iii. p. 60. 86, 87. 154, &c.

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order of deities preſided, and who never extended their views or hopes beyond the enjoyments of this life, certainly could not, with any ſhadow of juſtice, aſſume the liberty of forcing other nations to diſcard their own proper divinities, and receive in their ſtead the ſame objects of adoration with themſelves. The Romans, we know, were jealous in the extreme of introducing any novelties, or making the leaſt change in the public religion; but the citizens were never denied the privilege of individually conforming to any foreign mode of worſhip, or manifeſting, by the moſt ſolemn acts of devotion, their veneration for the gods of other countries [*m*].

Various kinds of deities.

IX. The principal deities of moſt nations, conſiſted of heroes renowned in antiquity, kings, emperors, founders of cities, and other illuſtrious perſons, whoſe eminent exploits, and the benefits they had conferred on mankind, were treaſured up and embalmed in the minds of poſterity, by whoſe gratitude they were crowned with immortal honours, and raiſed to the rank of gods. An apotheoſis had alſo been beſtowed on ſeveral of the ſofter ſex, whoſe virtues or ſuperior talents had improved and thrown a luſtre on the age in which they lived. This may eaſily be perceived by any one who will take the pains to explore the ſources of the heathen mythology; and it at once accounts for what muſt otherwiſe appear a monſtrous incongruity, namely, that of their attributing to thoſe celeſtial beings the ſame evil pro-

[*m*] Vid. Corn. a Bynkerſhoock, *Diſſert. de Cultu peregrinæ Religionis apud Romanos*, in Opuſcul. Lug. Bat. 1719, 4to. N° iv. Matth. Ægyptii. *Diſſertatio ad Senatus conſultum de Bacchanalibus*, tom. vii. Livii Drakenborchiani, p. 197, et ſeq. Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moſes*, vol. i. p. 307, et ſeq.

penſities,

penſities, errors, and vices, that we have daily to deplore as the characteriſtic frailties of human nature. In no other reſpects were the gods of the Gentiles ſuppoſed to be diſtinguiſhed beyond mankind, than by the enjoyment of power, and an immortal exiſtence. To the worſhip of divinities of this deſcription was joined, in many countries, that of ſome of the nobleſt and moſt excellent parts of the viſible world; the luminaries of heaven in particular, the ſun, the moon, and the ſtars, in whom, ſince the effects of their influence were conſtantly to be perceived, a mind or an intelligence was ſuppoſed to reſide. The ſuperſtitious practices of ſome regions were carried to an almoſt endleſs extreme: mountains, rivers, trees, the earth, the ſea, the winds; even the diſeaſes of the body, the virtues and the vices, (or rather certain tutelary genii, to whom the guardianſhip and care of all theſe things were conceived to belong,) were made the objects of adoration, and had divine honours regularly paid to them. In Egypt, this exceſs of religious culture reached to the worſhipping of the moſt noxious and venomous animals [*n*].

X. Buildings of the moſt ſuperb and magnificent kind, under the names of temples, fanes, &c. were raiſed and dedicated by the people of almoſt every country to their gods, with the expectation that the divinities would condeſcend to make thoſe ſumptuous edifices the places of their immediate reſidence. They were not all open to the public, but ſome of them confined to the exerciſe of private and retired devotion. Internally, thoſe of either deſcription were ornamented with

Temples and ſtatues of theſe deities.

[*n*] See the learned work of Gerard Jo. Voſſius, *de Idololatria*, lib. i. ii. iii.

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images of the gods, and furniſhed with altars, and the requiſite apparatus for ſacrifice.

The ſtatues were ſuppoſed to be animated by the deities whom they repreſented: for though the worſhippers of gods like thoſe above deſcribed, muſt, in great meaſure, have turned their backs on every dictate of reaſon, they were yet by no means willing to appear ſo wholly deſtitute of common ſenſe, as to pay their adoration to a mere idol of metal, wood, or ſtone; but always maintained, that their ſtatues, when properly conſecrated, were filled with the preſence of thoſe divinities whoſe forms they bore [o].

Sacrifices and other rites.

XI. The religious homage paid to theſe deities, conſiſted chiefly in the frequent performance of various rites, ſuch as the offering up of victims and ſacrifices, with prayers and other ceremonies. The ſacrifices and offerings, were different, according to the nature and attributes of the gods to whom they were addreſſed [p]. Brute animals were commonly devoted to this purpoſe; but in ſome nations of a ſavage and ferocious character, the horrible practice of ſacrificing human victims prevailed [q]. Of the prayers of pagan worſhippers, whether we regard the matter or the mode of expreſſion, it is impoſſible to ſpeak favourably: they were not only deſtitute in general of every thing allied to the ſpirit of ge-

[o] Arnob. *adv. Gentes*, lib. 6. p. 254. edit. Heraldi. Auguſtin. *de Civitate Dei*, lib. 8. c. 23. p. 161. tom. 7. opp. edit. Benedict. Julian. *Miſopogon*, p. 361. opp. edit. Spanheim.

[p] Vid. Jo. Saubertus, *de Sacrificiis veterum*, Lug. Bat. 1699, 8vo. and republiſhed by Crenius.

[q] See what has been collected on this ſubject by Columna, in his Commentary on the Fragments of Ennius, p. 29, et ſeq. Alſo Saubertus, *de Sacrificiis veterum*, cap. xxi. p. 455.

ruine

nuine piety, but were ſometimes framed expreſsly for the purpoſe of obtaining the countenance of heaven to the moſt abominable and flagitious undertakings [*r*]. In fact, the greater part of their religious obſervances, were of an abſurd and ridiculous nature, and in many inſtances ſtrongly tinctured with the moſt diſgraceful barbariſm and obſcenity. Their feſtivals and other ſolemn days, were polluted by a licentious indulgence in every ſpecies of libidinous exceſs; and on theſe occaſions, they were not prohibited even from making the ſacred manſions of their gods the ſcenes of vile and beaſtly gratification [*s*].

Their prieſts.

XII. The care of the temples, together with the ſuperintendance and direction of all religious ordinances, was committed to a claſs of men bearing the titles of prieſts or flamins. Within the peculiar province of theſe miniſters it came to ſee that the ancient and accuſtomed honours were paid to the deities publicly acknowledged, and that a due regard was manifeſted in every other reſpect for the religion of the ſtate. Theſe formed their ordinary duties; but ſuperſtition aſcribed to them functions of a far more exalted nature. It conſidered them rather in the light of intimate and familiar friends of the gods, than in that of officiating ſervants at their altars; and conſequently attributed to them the higheſt degree of ſanctity, influence, and power. With the minds of the people thus prejudiced in their

[*r*] Vid. Matth. Brouerius a Niedeck, *de Adorationibus veterum Populorum*, Traj. 1711, 8vo. Saubertus, *de Sacrificiis*, cap. xii. xiii. p. 343, et ſeq.

[*s*] The impiety and licentiouſneſs which characteriſed the feſtivals of heathen nations, are very fully and ably expoſed by Philo Judæus, in his treatiſe *de Cherubim*, p. 155, 156. tom. i. opp. edit. Mangey.

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favour, it could be no very difficult thing for an artful and designing set of men, possessed of a competent share of knowledge, to establish and support a system of spiritual dominion of the most absolute and tyrannical kind.

Mysteries.

XIII. In addition to the public service of the gods, at which every one was permitted to be present, the Egyptians, Persians, Grecians, Indians, and some other nations, had recourse to a species of dark and recondite worship, under the name of mysteries. The practice of certain secret religious rites may indeed be said to have been common to the people of almost all countries except the Romans, who adopted no such usage until the time of Adrian [*t*]. None were admitted to behold or partake in the celebration of these mysteries, but those who had approved themselves worthy of such distinction, by their fidelity and perseverance in the practice of a long and severe course of initiatory forms. The votaries were enjoined, under the peril of immediate death, to observe the most profound secrecy as to every thing that passed [*u*]: and this suffi-

[*t*] That the Romans practised no sort of mysteries before the time of our Saviour, is clear from the testimony of Dionysius Halicarnassensis, and others. Aurelius Victor is my authority for considering these secret rites, and particularly the Eleusinian mysteries, to have been introduced at Rome by the emperor Hadrian, whose curiosity was unbounded. *Pace ad orientem composita Romam regreditur. Ibi Græcorum more, seu Pompilii Numæ, cæremonias, leges, Gymnasia, doctoresque curare occæpit;—atque initia Cereris, Liberæque, quæ Eleusina dicitur Athenienſium modo, Roma percoleret.* Lib. *de Cæsarib.* cap. xiv. p. 349. edit. Arntzenii. I am aware that the credit of Aurelius Victor has been called in question by several very learned men, but I must confess I know not on what grounds.

[*u*] See what has been collected on this subject by Meursius, in his work *de Mysteriis Eleusiniis*; and by Clarkson, in his *Discours sur les Liturgies*, § 4. p. 36.

ciently

ciently accounts for the difficulty that we find in obtaining any information reſpecting the nature of theſe recluſe practices, and for the diſcordant and contradictory opinions concerning them that are to be met with in the writings of various authors, ancient as well as modern [*v*]. From what little can be collected on the ſubject, it ſhould ſeem that theſe myſteries were not all of the ſame nature. In the celebration of ſome of them, it is pretty plain, that many things were done in the higheſt degree repugnant to virtue, modeſty, and every finer feeling. In others, perhaps, the courſe of proceeding might be of a very different complexion; and it is very probable that in thoſe of a more refined caſt, ſome advances were made in bringing back religion to the teſt of reaſon, by inquiring into and expoſing the origin and abſurdity of the popular ſuperſtitions and worſhip [*w*]. There might, therefore, be ſome

[*v*] Dr. Warburton has diſcuſſed the ſubject of theſe myſteries with much ingenuity, though not always with equal felicity, in his celebrated work on *the Divine Legation of Moſes*, tom. i. lib. 2. ſect. 4. p. 131. ſ. That great ſcholar thinks that all the different ſorts of myſteries were inſtituted for the purpoſe of teaching the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul. But this appears to me to be carrying the matter too far. I grant that in ſome of them, the principles of a rational religion might be inculcated, and the abſurdity of the public ſuperſtitions expoſed; but that this was the caſe with all, no one can believe who has attended to the nature of the myſteries of Bacchus, the celebration of which, according to Livy, was poſitively forbidden at Rome. I have myſelf formerly written on the ſubject of the myſteries, by way of note to Cudworth's *Intellectual Syſtem of the Univerſe*, tom. 1. p. 329. tom. 2. p. 1049.; and I ſtill retain the ſame ſentiments that I there expreſſed.

[*w*] Vid. Cicero *Diſput. Tuſculan.* lib. i. cap. 13. tom. 8. opp. ed. Minoris Verburgianæ. Lib. i. *de Legibus*, cap. 24. p. 3362. Varro *apud Auguſtinum de Civitate Dei*, lib. iv. cap. 31. p. 87. tom. 7. opp. Euſebius *Præparat. Evangelica*, lib. ii. cap. 3. p. 61. ſ.

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foundation for the promiſe uſually held forth to thoſe who were about to be initiated, that they would be put in poſſeſſion of the means of rendering this life happy, and alſo have the expectation opened to them of entering on an improved ſtate of exiſtence hereafter. However this might be, it is certain that the higheſt veneration was entertained by the people of every country for what were termed the myſteries; and the Chriſtians, perceiving this, were induced to make their religion conform in many reſpects to this part of the heathen model, hoping that it might thereby the more readily obtain a favourable reception with thoſe whom it was their object and their hope to convert [x].

The religion of the Greeks and Romans.

XIV. At the time of Chriſt's birth, the religion of Rome had been received, together with its government and laws, by a great part of the world. The principal tenets of that religion were built on the ſuperſtitions of Greece [y]; but, at the ſame time, there was in ſome points a material difference between the two. For not to ſay any thing of the regulations eſtabliſhed by Numa

[x] They adopted, for inſtance, in common with the pagan nations, the plan of dividing their ſacred offices into two claſſes: the one public, to which every perſon was freely admitted; the other ſecret or myſterious, from which all the unprofeſſed were excluded. The initiated were thoſe who had been baptiſed; the unprofeſſed, the catechumens. The mode of preparatory examination alſo bore a ſtrong reſemblance, in many reſpects, to the courſe of initiatory forms obſerved by the heathen nations, in regard to their myſteries. In a word, many forms and ceremonies, to paſs over other things of the Chriſtian worſhip, were evidently copied from theſe ſecret rites of paganiſm; and we have only to lament that, what was thus done with unqueſtionably the beſt intentions, ſhould in ſome reſpects have been attended with an evil reſult.

[y] Vid. Dionyſius Halicarn. *Antiquit. Romanor.* lib. 7. cap. 72. p. 460. tom. i. opp. ed. Hudſoni.

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and others, relating to the government and ſupport of the ſtate, the people had in the courſe of time, adopted much of the old Etruſcan mythology, and a place amongſt their gods had alſo been given by them to ſome of the Egyptian deities [z].

The religions of other nations adulterated by the Romans.

XV. But ſince the conquered nations did not ſo implicitly conform to the Roman religion, as utterly to diſcard that of their anceſtors, a ſpecies of mixed religious culture by degrees ſprung up in the provinces, partaking in its nature both of the religion of the country, and of that of Rome. It appears to have been the object of the Roman government at one time, completely to aboliſh the religious ſyſtems of thoſe nations whoſe ſacred rites were of a ferocious and cruel character, or in any ſhape repugnant to humanity [a]; and to introduce their own religion in their ſtead. The attachment however of thoſe barbarians to the ſuperſtitions of their forefathers, entirely defeated the accompliſhment of thoſe views, and rendered it impoſſible to effect any thing beyond a ſort of compromiſe, by which certain of the Roman deities and rites were aſſociated and intermixed with thoſe peculiarly belonging to the conquered countries. Hence it is that we frequently find a deity diſtinguiſhed by two appellations; the one being its original title, the other that which it had acquired by this kind of denization: and to the ſame cauſe we muſt refer much of that affinity which

[z] Vid. Petitus *Comment. in Leges Atticas*, lib. 1. tit. 1. p. 71. f. ed. Batav. Lactantius *Divinar. Inſtitution.* lib. 1. cap. 20.

[a] Vid. Strabo, *Geograph.* lib. iv. *p.* 189, 190, where, after deſcanting on the barbarous and inhuman religious rites of the Gauls, the Germans, and the Celts, he ſtates that every endeavour was uſed by the Romans to aboliſh them.

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is often to be perceived between the Roman forms of worſhip, and thoſe of the nations which they ſubdued.

The religions of the Indians, Egyptians, Perſians, and Celts.

XVI. Amongſt the moſt remarkable of the religions which prevailed at that time, may be reckoned thoſe which were cultivated by the Indians, the Perſians, the Egyptians, and the Celts. Of theſe the Indians and Celts are chiefly diſtinguiſhed, by having ſelected for the objects of their adoration a ſet of antient heroes and leaders, whoſe memory, ſo far from being rendered illuſtrious by their virtues, had come down to poſterity diſgraced and loaded with vice and infamy. Both theſe nations (or rather claſſes of men,) believed that, the ſouls of men ſurvived the diſſolution of their bodies: the former conceiving that all of them without diſtinction migrated into new terreſtrial habitations; whilſt the latter on the contrary, conſidering immortal life as the meed beſtowed by heaven on valour alone, ſuppoſed that the bodies of the brave, after being purified by fire, again became the receptacles of their ſouls, and that the heroes thus renewed, were received into the council and ſociety of the gods. The moſt deſpotic authority was committed to their prieſts by the people of either country: their functions were not limited to the adminiſtration of divine matters, but extended to the enacting of laws, and the various other departments of civil government.

The religion of the Egyptians.

XVII. In treating of the religion of the Egyptians, it is neceſſary to make a diſtinction; ſince only a part of it can properly be conſidered as the general religion of the country, the practice of the reſt being confined to particular provinces or diſtricts. The liberty which every city and province enjoyed of adopting what gods it pleaſed, and

of

of worſhipping them under any forms which the inhabitants might think proper to inſtitute, of courſe gave riſe to a great variety of private ſyſtems. In the choice of their public or national gods, no ſort of delicacy was manifeſted, the chief claſs of them being indiſcriminately compoſed of mortals renowned in hiſtory for their virtues, and thoſe diſtinguiſhed alone by the enormity of their crimes: ſuch as Oſiris, Serapis, Typhon, Iſis and others. With the worſhip of theſe, was joined that of the conſtellations, the ſun, the moon, the dog-ſtar, animals of almoſt every kind, certain ſorts of plants, and I know not of what elſe. Whether the religion of the ſtate, or that peculiar to any province or city be conſidered, it will be found equally remote in its principles from every thing liberal, dignified, or rational; ſome parts were ridiculous in the extreme, and the whole in no ſmall degree contaminated by a deſpicable baſeneſs and obſcurity. Indeed the religion of the Egyptians, was ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed by abſurd and diſgraceful traits, that it was made the ſubject of deriſion even by thoſe whoſe own tenets and practice were by no means formed on the ſuggeſtions of a ſound wiſdom [*b*]. The prieſts had a ſacred code peculiarly their own, founded on very different principles from thoſe which characterized the popular religion, and which they ſtudiouſly concealed from the curioſity of the public, by wrapping it up in characters the meaning and power of which were only known to themſelves. Nothing abſolutely certain, it ſhould ſeem, can be aſcertained reſpect-

[*b*] See what I have ſaid concerning the religion of the Egyptians, in a note to Cudworth's *Intell. Syſtem. tom.* i. *p.* 415.

ing

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ing it, but if we may give credit to what is ſaid by ſome antient authors on the ſubject, it bore a pretty cloſe analogy to that ſyſtem, which attributes the production of every part of the univerſe to a certain energy or power contained and operating within itſelf; putting nature in fact in the place of the Deity [*c*].

The religion of the Perſians.

XVIII. The Perſians owed their religious inſtitutes chiefly to Zoroaſter. The leading principle of their religion was, that all things were derived from two common governing cauſes; the one the author of all good, the other of all evil: the former the ſource of light, mind, and ſpiritual intelligence; the latter that of darkneſs and matter, with all its groſſer incidents. Between theſe two powerful agents they ſuppoſed a conſtant war to be carried on. Thoſe however who taught upon this ſyſtem did not explain it all in the ſame way, or draw from it the ſame concluſions: hence uniformity was deſtroyed, and many different ſects generated. The opinion of the better inſtructed ſeems to have been, that there was one Supreme Deity, to whom they gave the name of MITHRA, and that under him there were two of inferior degree, the one called OROMASDES, the author of all good, the other ARIMAN, the cauſe of all evil. The common people who equally believed in the exiſtence of a Supreme Being, under the title of MITHRA, appear to have conſidered him as all one with the ſun; and it is probable, that with the two inferior deities above-

[*c*] The more occult and abſtruſe parts of the Egyptian religion have been inveſtigated with much ſagacity and erudition, by the learned Paul. Ern. Jablonſki in his *Pantheon Ægyptiorum, ſeu de diis eorum Comment.* 8vo. Francf. 1750.

mentioned,

mentioned, they joined others, of whom ſcarcely any thing can be known at this day, [*d*].

XIX. Whoever will attentively examine the nature of the antient religions, muſt, I think, readily perceive that nearly all of them were framed by the prieſts upon principles ſuited to the climate, the extent, and the civil conſtitution of the ſtates for which they were reſpectively deſigned. Hence by way of diſtinction, they may be divided into two claſſes, the civil, and the military. Under the former may be placed the ſyſtems of almoſt all the eaſtern nations, the Perſians, Indians, Egyptians and others, whoſe religious inſtitutes were manifeſtly ſubſervient to the public weal, by promoting the ſafety and tranquillity of the people, encouraging thoſe arts by which the neceſſaries of life were multiplied, and ſecuring to the kings and magiſtrates a due degree of authority and dignity. Within the latter diviſion we would comprehend the religious economy of all the people of the north; nations whoſe every ſentiment imbibed from their prieſts, reſpecting the gods, and the proper mode of ſacred worſhip, tended to inſpire them with fortitude of mind, a contempt of death, a ferocity of diſpoſition, and every other quality calculated to form a valorous and warlike people. Under governments of a mild and moderate character, the gods were repreſented as juſt, placable, and merciful: in thoſe of the oppoſite deſcription, the people were made to believe that the deities delighted in ſeverity, were harſh, wrathful, quickly

Theſe religions ſuited to the climate, &c. of the countries where they prevailed.

[*d*] Dr. Hyde has written a commentary profeſſedly *de veterum Perſarum Religione*, 4to. Oxon. 1700; but his work muſt be read with ſome caution. Some remarks on the ſame ſubject are to be met with in my notes to Cudworth's *Intellectual Syſtem*, tom. i. p. 327 & 249. f.

to

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to be irritated, and with difficulty brought over to the ſide of mercy.

Virtue and ſanctity of morals not promoted by theſe religions.

XX. None of theſe various ſyſtems of religion appear to have contributed in the leaſt towards an amendment of the moral principle, a reformation of manners, or to the exciting a love, or even a reſpect, for virtue of any ſort. The gods and goddeſſes who were held up as objects of adoration to the common people, inſtead of exhibiting in themſelves examples of a refined and ſupereminent virtue, diſplayed in illuſtrious actions, ſtood forth to public view the avowed authors of the moſt flagrant and enormous crimes [*e*]. The prieſts likewiſe took no ſort of intereſt whatever in the regulation of the public morals, neither directing the people by their precepts, nor inviting them by exhortation and example, to the purſuit of a wiſe and honourable courſe of life; but on the contrary indulged themſelves in the moſt unwarrantable licentiouſneſs, maintaining that the whole of religion was comprized in the rites and ceremonies inſtituted by their anceſtors, and that

[*e*] The moſt learned of the Greeks and Romans admit this: vid. Plato *de Legibus*, lib. i. p. 776, & *de Republica*, lib. ii. p. 430, 431. opp. edit. Ficini. Iſocrates *in Orat. in Encomio Buſiridis*, p. 452. 1. Seneca *de Vita beata*, cap. xxvi. p. 639. tom. i. opp. Terentius, *Eunuch.* act iii. ſc. 5. v. 35. Martialis, lib. xi. epig. 44. From this circumſtance, Ovid takes occaſion elegantly to caution thoſe females who had a regard for their honour, to avoid the temples of the deities. *Triſt.* lib. ii. v. 287, & ſeq.

" Quis locus eſt templis auguſtior? Hæc quoque vitet,
" In culpam ſi qua eſt ingenioſa ſuam.
" Cum ſteterit Jovis Æde, Jovis ſuccurret in Æde
" Quam multas Matres fecerit ille Deus.
" Proxima adoranti Junonia templa ſubibit
" Pellicibus multis hanc doluiſſe Deam.
" Pallade conſpecta, natum de crimine Virgo
" Suſtulerit quare, quæret Erichtonium.

every

every ſort of ſenſual gratification was liberally allowed by the gods to thoſe who regularly miniſtered to them in this way [*f*]. The doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul and of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, had alſo been but very partially diffuſed, and even what had been advanced on the ſubject was, for the moſt part, of a very vague and unſatisfactory nature, and in ſome reſpects calculated, rather to corrupt the mind than to produce any good effects. Hence, at the coming of our Saviour, any notions of this kind found little or no acceptance with thoſe who pretended to any thing beyond a common ſhare of knowledge, and eſpecially the Greeks and Romans, but were all regarded in the light of old wives fables, fit only for the amuſement of women and children. No particular points of belief reſpecting the immortality of the ſoul being eſtabliſhed by the public religion, every one was at liberty to avow what opinions he might pleaſe on the ſubject [*g*].

XXI. Under

[*f*] See what is ſaid on this ſubject by Barbeyrac in the preface to his French tranſlation of Puffendorf's work *de Jure Naturæ & Gentium*, laſt edit. § vi. p. xxii.

[*g*] *Polybius Hiſtoriar.* lib. vi. cap. liv. p. 693. tom. i. ed. Gronov. According to Salluſt, in *Catalin.* cap. li. p. 309, 310. ed. Cortian, Julius Cæſar when delivering himſelf publickly in the Roman ſenate, made no ſcruple of denying that man had any thing to fear or hope for after death: *de pœna poſſumus equidem dicere id, quod res habet: in luctu atque miſeriis mortem ærumnarum requiem, non cruciatum eſſe: eam cuncta mortalium mala diſſolvere: ultra neque curæ neque gaudio locum eſſe.* Which ſpeech of Cæſar's, ſo far from calling down the cenſure of that great defender and ornament of the ſtoic philoſophy M. Portius Cato, ſeems rather to have met with his unqualified approbation: For in cap. lii. § 13. p. 332, we find him as it were ſtudiouſly panegyriſing it.—*Bene et compoſitè*, ſays he, *Cæſar paullo ante in hoc ordine de vita et morte diſſeruit: falſa, credo, exiſtimans quæ de inferis memorantur; diverſo itenere malos a bonis loca tetra, inculta, fœda,*

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The lives of men profeſſing theſe religions, moſt flagitious.

XXI. Under the influence of ſuch circumſtances, it is not to be wondered at that the ſtate of ſociety ſhould have become in the higheſt degree depraved. The lives of men of every claſs, from the higheſt to the loweſt, were conſumed in the practice of the moſt abominable and flagitious vices: even crimes, the horrible turpitude of which was ſuch, that it would be defiling the ear of decency but to name them, were openly perpetrated with the greateſt impunity. If evidence be required of this, the reader may at once ſatisfy himſelf of the truth of what is here ſaid, by referring to LUCIAN amongſt the Greek authors, and to the Roman poets JUVENAL and PERSIUS. In the writings of the former in particular, he will find the moſt deteſtable unnatural affections, and other heinous practices, treated of at large and with the utmoſt familiarity, as things of ordinary and daily occurrence. Should any one conceive that theſe or other writers might give the rein too freely to their imagination, and ſuffer themſelves to be carried into extremes by their genius for ſatire and ſharp rebuke, let him turn his attention to thoſe cruel and inhuman exhibitions which are well known to have yielded the higheſt gratification to the inhabitants of Greece and Italy, (people, who in point of refinement, poſſeſſed a ſuperiority over all other nations of the world,) the ſavage conflicts of the gladiators in the circus: let him caſt his eye on

fœda, atque formidoloſa habere. Never would theſe great and leading characters have ventured to ſpeak after this manner in the ſenate, had it been a part of the public religion to believe in the immortality of the ſoul: nay, had a belief of this kind even been generally prevalent amongſt the people, ſuch ſentiments as the above could never have been uttered in public.

that

that diſſoluteneſs of manners by which the walks of private life were polluted; the horrible proſtitution of boys, to which the laws oppoſed no reſtraint; the liberty of divorce which belonged to the wife equally with the huſband; the ſhameful practice of expoſing infants, and procuring abortions; the little regard that was ſhewn to the lives of ſlaves; the multiplicity of ſtews and brothels, many of which were conſecrated even to the gods themſelves. Let him reflect on theſe, and various other criminal exceſſes, to the moſt ample indulgence in which the government offered not the leaſt impediment, and then ſay, if ſuch were the people diſtinguiſhed beyond all others by the excellence of their laws and the ſuperiority of their attainments in literature and the arts, what muſt have been the ſtate of thoſe nations who poſſeſſed none of theſe advantages, but were governed entirely by the impulſes and dictates of rude and uncultivated nature [*b*]!

The arguments uſed by the prieſts in defence of theſe religions.

XXII. It was impoſſible that the vanity, the madneſs, the deformity of ſyſtems like theſe, ſhould eſcape the obſervation of any who had not renounced both reaſon and common ſenſe. But to all objections that might be raiſed, the artful prieſts were ever furniſhed with a reply from two ſources: firſt, the miracles and prodigies which they aſſerted were daily wrought in the temples, and before the ſtatues of the gods and heroes; and, ſecondly, the oracles or ſpirit of divination,

[*b*] A very copious and animated deſcription of the extreme profligacy of manners that characteriſed the heathen worſhippers, is given by Cyprian in the firſt of his *Epiſtles*, p. 2. ed. Baluz. Several things likewiſe on this ſubject are brought together from ancient monuments by Cornelius Adam, in his *Exercitatio de Malis Romanorum ante Prædicationem Evangelii Moribus*, which is the fifth of his *Exercitationes exegeticæ*, Groning. 1712, 4to.

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by which they pretended that the gods, either by ſigns, or in words and verſes, made known what was about to happen. The deception practiſed in either caſe was made the ſubject of ridicule by many, who ſaw through the fraud and knavery of the prieſts; but a regard for their own ſafety conſtrained them to obſerve no little degree of caution in the exerciſe of this ſort of pleaſantry. For in all theſe matters an appearance was conſtantly maintained, ſufficiently ſpecious and impoſing to ſeize on vulgar minds; and the multitude was ever ready, at the call of the prieſts, to aſſert the majeſty of their gods, and to puniſh with the utmoſt ſeverity thoſe who might be charged with having done any thing inimical to the intereſts of the public religion.

Philoſophers.

XXIII. This ſtate of things rendered it neceſſary for thoſe who embraced opinions more conſonant to reaſon, and whom it became cuſtomary to diſtinguiſh by the appellation of philoſophers, to temporize in a certain degree; and although they might entertain a juſt contempt for thoſe notions reſpecting religion by which the vulgar were influenced, they yet found it expedient to pay the accuſtomed honours to the gods of the country, and ſo far to qualify and ſoften down their doctrines, as to render them not obviouſly repugnant to the ancient eſtabliſhed religion. Amongſt this claſs of men there were not wanting ſome, indeed, who ventured with much point and ingenuity to contend againſt the popular ſuperſtitions and abſurd notions reſpecting the gods; and who, in many reſpects, defined the rules of human conduct on principles equally conſonant to nature and reaſon; apparently conſidering every part of this univerſe as ſubject to the governance of an omnipotent, all-bountiful, and pre-excellent deity: and

and there ſeems, therefore, to be no foundation for the opinion which ſome have entertained, that all theſe philoſophers were the favourers of impiety, or in fact atheiſts, denying altogether the exiſtence of a God [*i*]. It muſt, however, be acknowledged, INTROD. CHAP. I.

[*i*] There is a remarkable paſſage in Cicero, which goes near to prove that, in his time, philoſophers of every ſect were accounted the adverſaries of the gods and of religion. It occurs in that part of his treatiſe *de Inventione*, where he diſcuſſes the nature of probabilities; and lays it down, that all matters of common belief (quæ in opinione poſita ſunt,) are to be regarded as ſuch. By way of illuſtration, he adduces the following examples: "In eo autem quod in opinione poſitum eſt, hujuſmodi ſunt probabilia: impiis apud inferos pœnas eſſe preparatas: *eos, qui philoſophiæ dent operam, non arbitrari deos eſſe.*" *De Inventione*, lib. i. cap. 29. tom. i. opp. p. 171. ed. Verburgianæ. In the time of Cicero, therefore, it was the general opinion that thoſe who were called philoſophers denied the exiſtence of the gods; and hence, according to his judgment, it was not leſs probable that they did ſo, than that there were puniſhments in reſerve for the wicked hereafter. It is eſtabliſhed indeed beyond doubt, by many paſſages in ancient authors, that the number of impious and wicked men was very great in that age, and eſpecially amongſt thoſe of the philoſophic ſects. Juvenal notices this depravity, ſat. 13. v. 86, 87.

"Sunt in fortunæ qui caſibus omnia ponant,
Et nullo credant mundum rectore moveri,
Natura volvente vices, et lucis, et anni,
Atque ideo intrepidi quæcumque altaria tangunt."

Philo Judæus alſo complains in the ſtrongeſt terms of the great prevalence of atheiſm in his time. Lib. 3. *Allegor. Legis*, p. 93. tom. i. opp. I do not, however, think that we ought to give implicit credit to thoſe who involve all the philoſophers of thoſe times in one undiſtinguiſhing cenſure, and inſiſt that even thoſe were at enmity with religion, in whoſe writings are to be found the moſt admirable diſcuſſions relative to God, and ſubjects of a divine nature: and it appears to me that many very learned men of modern times have ſtrained matters too far, in attempting to prove that it was the object of all the ancient ſects, either avowedly or in ſecret, to undermine the fundamental principles of all religion. Can it for a moment be believed that none of thoſe

knowledged, that the principles lain down by many of them went wholly to extinguiſh every ſenſe

great and excellent men, whoſe minds were, as far as we can perceive, uninfluenced by any vitious or illiberal principle, ſhould have been ſo happy as to poſſeſs the faculty of reaſoning juſtly and with perſpicuity? Can we conceive that thoſe who expreſsly acknowledged the exiſtence of a God, and ſublimely deſcanted on the nature of his attributes, were all deceivers and liars, believing one thing, and writing and profeſſing another? Not to notice what has been urged on the ſubject by authors of more ancient date, that excellent and eminently ſagacious writer, Dr. Warburton, has, with a vaſt deal of ingenuity and abundance of learning, laboured to eſtabliſh this point, in his celebrated work on the *Divine Legation of Moſes*, vol. i. p. 332. f. and p. 419. f. He would fain perſuade us, that all the philoſophers diſbelieved and denied the immortality of the ſoul in private, whatever might be the ſentiments they publicly avowed and taught reſpecting it; and that in reality they gave the place of the Deity to a principle, which they termed the Nature of Things; conſidering the minds of men to be particles ſeparated from the ſoul of the univerſe, and that upon the diſſolution of their bodies, theſe particles again ſought and were re-united to the ſource from whence they proceeded. But without objecting that we have no authority for this but the Grecian philoſophers, whereas other nations had their peculiar philoſophic ſects, differing widely in their tenets from thoſe of Greece: laying aſide, I ſay, this objection, we cannot help remarking that this illuſtrious author has by no means ſubſtantiated his accuſation by thoſe plain and irrefragable proofs which the importance of the caſe ſhould ſeem to demand, but ſupports it merely by conjectures, coupled with a few examples, and finally by inferences drawn from certain inſtitutes or dogmas of particular philoſophers. Now, if accuſations are required to be made good only according to theſe rules; if examples and inferences be deemed ſufficient to convict thoſe, whoſe words excite not the leaſt ſuſpicion of any latent criminality,—who, I would aſk, ſhall be accounted innocent? With that mediocrity of talent, and thoſe inferior powers to which alone I can pretend, in compariſon with ſuch a man as Warburton, let me only have permiſſion to adopt the ſame mode of attack againſt the whole body of Chriſtian divines, as he has availed himſelf of in regard to the ancient philoſophers, and I will

ſenſe of God and of religion, and completely to do away all diſtinction between good and evil; and that in the tenets even of thoſe who eſpouſed the cauſe of God and of morality, many things were contained to which no good or rational man could yield his approbation or aſſent [*k*]. If the very beſt of theſe philoſophic ſyſtems, therefore, had been ſubſtituted in the place of the ancient popular religions, it may well be queſtioned whether it would eventually have been attended with any conſiderable advantage to mankind.

Two modes of philoſophiſing prevail.

XXIV. At the time of the Son of God's appearance upon earth, there were two ſpecies of philoſophy, that generally prevailed throughout the civilized world: the one, that of Greece; the other, what is uſually termed the Oriental. There are many, indeed, who make no diſtinction between theſe two kinds of philoſophy; but it appears to me that, in blending them together, they confound things of a very oppoſite nature, and betray no trifling want of information reſpecting matters of antiquity [*l*]. The term philoſophy

I will undertake to prove that none of them were ſincere in what they publicly profeſſed, but that all were devoted to the purpoſe of ſlyly inſtilling into men's minds the poiſon of impiety.

[*k*] By way of ſpecimen, we refer the reader to what is ſaid reſpecting the abſurd tenets of the philoſophers of their time, by Juſtin Martyr, *Dial. cum Tryphon.* p. 4, 5, 6, 7. edit. Jebb.; and by Hermias, in an elegant little work, entitled, *Irriſio Philoſophiæ.* If any additional proof were wanting on the ſubject, enough might eaſily be collected to form a volume of itſelf.

[*l*] Every one who has examined this ſubject thoroughly muſt admit, that nothing can be better authenticated than the vaſt and eſſential difference that exiſted between the philoſophy of the eaſtern nations and that of the ſages of Greece. It is equally well eſtabliſhed, that amongſt the different doctrines profeſſed by the various oriental ſects,

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loſophy properly belonged to the former; thoſe who were familiar with the Greek language having given to the other the apppellation of γνῶσις, or knowledge: to underſtand the force of which term, it is neceſſary that we conſider the word Θεὸς, or God, as annexed to it[m]; ſince the leading

that of the ancient Chaldeans and Perſians, which regarded matter as the ſource of all evil, and ſuppoſed it to be under the influence and controul of a ſpiritual agent peculiar to itſelf, held the chief place, being the moſt widely diſſeminated of any, and that on which ingenuity had particularly exerciſed itſelf in giving it variety of modification. It muſt alſo, unleſs I am very much miſtaken, be apparent to every unprejudiced inquirer, that in this moſt ancient philoſophy originated all thoſe modes of diſcipline adopted by the profeſſors of the Gnoſtic ſyſtem, and which, though they were in many reſpects different from each other, had yet, as it ſhould ſeem, amongſt other points of ſimilarity, one common origin and end. It can alſo be ſhewn, if it ſhould be thought neceſſary, that the name or title of "oriental philoſophy or doctrine" was known to ancient writers. Amongſt other proofs which might be adduced, ſome extracts from Theodotus, one of the Gnoſtic ſchool, which were made for the uſe of Clemens Alexandrinus, are ſtill extant under the following title, which appears to be of very ancient date: Ἐκ τῶν Θεοδότου καὶ τῆς ΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΚΗΣ καλουμένης ΔΙΔΑΣΚΑΛΙΑΣ ἐπιτόμαι. *Excerpta ex Scriptis Theodoti et Doctrina quæ Orientalis appellatur.*

Whether the perſon who gave this title to the work were himſelf a Gnoſtic, or an enemy of the Gnoſtics, it leaves us in no doubt as to this fact, that the Gnoſtics mingled none of the principles of the Grecian philoſophy with their ſyſtem of diſcipline, but framed it entirely after the oriental model. In acting thus, they neither impoſed upon others, nor were they deceived themſelves.

[m] The word Γνῶσις was uſed by the Greeks to expreſs the knowledge of ſuch things as are not the objects of ſenſe, but are only to be comprehended by the mind or underſtanding; and ſince thoſe things which are perceptible to the mind alone are not liable to alteration or change, but continue fixed, and are perennial, the appellation γνῶσις ſeems to have been not improperly uſed to ſignify that ſpecies of knowledge which relates to things of an eternal and immutable

leading tenet of thoſe who profeſſed this ſpecies of philoſophy was, that by means of their inſtitutes, that knowledge of the Supreme Deity and great Firſt Cauſe of all things, which it had been the ill fate of mortals to loſe, might again be diſcovered and reſtored to mankind. The principles of the former, or what was properly called Philoſophy, were not confined to Greece, but were embraced by all ſuch of the Romans as aſpired to any eminence of wiſdom. The followers of the latter were chiefly to be found in Perſia, Chaldæa, Syria, Egypt, and the other oriental regions. Many of the Jews had likewiſe adopted it. Both theſe ſorts of philoſophy were ſplit into various ſects, but with this diſtinction, that thoſe which ſprang from the oriental ſyſtem all proceeded on one and the ſame principle, and of courſe had many tenets in common, though they might differ

mutable nature. Vid. Jac. Thomaſii *Origines Hiſtoriæ Eccleſ. et Philoſophiæ*, § 25. ſ. p. 21. ſ. The term appears to have had a ſimilar meaning, when applied to that kind of philoſophy which I denominate the oriental; ſince it was not converſant with objects of opinion and ſenſe, but occupied itſelf ſolely in the contemplation of things of an abſtract and unchangeable nature. I conceive, however, that we ought to underſtand it in a more reſtricted ſenſe, when we find it applied to that ſpecies of philoſophy to which the earlieſt corrupters of Chriſtianity were inclined, and that in this caſe it was uſed emphatically to ſignify the knowledge of the Deity in particular: for it was the boaſt of the teachers of that vain ſyſtem, that through their means mankind might recover that knowledge of the true God, from which nearly the whole world had long been eſtranged. The knowledge of the Deity, indeed, ſince it is infinitely above all other knowledge that can be acquired by man, and is the fountain from whence alone true religion can ſpring, may certainly in the ſtrongeſt and moſt emphatical ſenſe be ſtyled γνῶσις or knowledge. It is in this way that the ſacred writers, when ſpeaking of that truth which is our guide to ſalvation, ſtyle it ſimply ἀλήθεια, truth; and a faith in Chriſt, πίστις, faith, without any addition.

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as to ſome particular inferences and opinions; whilſt thoſe to which the philoſophy of Greece gave riſe were divided in opinion even as to the elements or firſt principles of wiſdom, and were conſequently widely ſeparated from each other in the whole courſe of their diſcipline. St. Paul adverts to each of theſe ſyſtems, (to that of Greece, Col. ii. 8.; to the oriental, Tim. i. 4. iv. 7. vi. 20.) and ſtrenuouſly exhorts the Chriſtians to beware of blending the doctrines of either with the religion of their divine maſter [*n*]. To this admonition

[*n*] The moſt learned expoſitors and commentators on the Holy Scriptures, as well ancient as modern, are unanimouſly of opinion that St. Paul, in the paſſages to which I have referred, meant to reprove thoſe who, in the then infancy of Chriſtianity, had the preſumption to attempt encumbering the beautifully plain and ſimple doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt, with expoſitions founded on that ſpecies of philoſophy, to which they had given the pompous title of γνῶσις, or knowledge of the Supreme Deity. The remarkable paſſage, indeed, which I have cited from that inſpired writer, in which he warns Timothy to avoid "oppoſitions of ſcience falſely ſo called," (1 Tim. vi. 20.) applies ſo directly to the vain and fooliſh ſyſtem ſtyled γνῶσις, that even the arguments of thoſe who would willingly give it a different interpretation, inſtead of invalidating, have rather added ſtrength and confirmation to this conſtruction of it. It is clear from the words of St. Paul, 1ſt, That there was a particular ſpecies of philoſophic diſcipline prevalent among the Greeks of his time, to which his friend would underſtand him to allude by the appellation γνῶσις. 2dly, That it was not a ſyſtem cultivated in retirement and privacy, for he ſpeaks of it as a thing openly known, and familiar to the public. 3dly, That it appeared to him undeſerving of ſuch an high and auguſt title; for he ſays, that it is "falſely" (by which we muſt underſtand him to mean improperly and without reaſon) "ſo called." 4thly, That thoſe who were addicted to this philoſophy had been endeavouring to blend its doctrines with thoſe of the Chriſtian religion: for if no one had attempted this, with what propriety could he have admoniſhed Timothy to beware of this ſect, and to keep that depoſit of divine truth, which had been committed to his truſt, pure and

admonition had thoſe to whom it was directed paid due attention, they would in an eminent degree have conſulted the intereſts of the cauſe they had eſpouſed. But to the great injury of divine truth, it unfortunately happened that vain and preſumptuous men could not be ſatisfied with that wiſdom which leads to eternal life, as it came pure from above; but muſt needs ſet about reconciling it, firſt of all to the principles of the oriental philoſophy, and afterwards to many of the dogmas of the Grecian ſects. INTROD. CHAP. I.

XXV. The more illuſtrious ſects of the Grecian ſchool, whoſe doctrines were alſo much cultivated by the Romans, may be divided into two claſſes: the one compriſing thoſe whoſe tenets ſtruck at the root of all religion; pretending, indeed, by ſpecious eulogium, to ſupport and recommend The Greek philoſophic ſects. The Epicureans.

and uncontaminated by any admixture with ſuch vain and trifling theories 5thly, That the profeſſors of this ſort of diſcipline maintained the exiſtence of certain ἀντιθέσεις, or oppoſitions, which, ſince they are the only circumſtances relating to it that are noticed by the apoſtle, may without doubt be conſidered as having conſtituted the eſſential and fundamental principles of the ſyſtem. What we are to underſtand by theſe oppoſitions may readily be perceived: for it was an eſtabliſhed tenet with the followers of this doctrine that light and darkneſs, God and matter, the body and the ſoul, the Supreme Deity, and thoſe powers by whom they ſuppoſed the univerſe to be governed, were conſtantly at variance and oppoſed to each other; even man himſelf, according to them, was a compound, made up of two adverſe and conflicting principles; and the powers of darkneſs ever occupied in active hoſtility againſt eternal light. Upon the ground of theſe oppoſitions they pretended to account for all events and changes whatever, whether natural, moral, or political, and in fact for every occurrence good or evil. It is, therefore, with no leſs propriety than elegance that St. Paul intimates his diſapprobation of the whole ſyſtem, by a ſtrongly marked reprehenſion of theſe its diſtinguiſhing features.

the

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the cauſe of virtue, but in reality nouriſhing the intereſts of vice, and giving colour to almoſt every ſpecies of criminality; the other being compoſed of ſuch as acknowledged the exiſtence of a deity, whom it was the duty of men to worſhip and obey, and who inculcated an eſſential and eternal diſtinction between good and evil, juſt and unjuſt; but who unfortunately ſullied and diſgraced what they thus taught conformably to right reaſon, by connecting with it various notions, either abſurd and trifling in their nature, or taken up haſtily, and with an unwarrantable preſumption [o]. Under the firſt of theſe claſſes may be ranked the diſciples of Epicurus and thoſe of the academy. The Epicureans maintained that the univerſe aroſe out of a fortuitous concurrence of atoms; that the gods (whoſe exiſtence they dared not abſolutely to deny) were indifferent as to human affairs, or rather entirely unacquainted with them; that our ſouls are born and die; that all things depend on, and are determined by accident; that in every thing, voluptuous gratification was to be ſought after as the chief good; and even virtue itſelf only to be purſued, inaſmuch as it might promiſe to miniſter at the ſhrine of pleaſure. The votaries of a ſyſtem like this, (and there were but few amongſt the favoured children of proſperity, the wealthy, the noble,

[o] The reader will find what we have here briefly ſtated, reſpecting the different ſects of philoſophers, treated of at large in a very maſterly manner by the learned Brucker, in his *Hiſtoria Philoſophiæ Critica*; a work that will immortalize the erudition of its author, and which no one ought to be without, who is willing to acquire an accurate knowledge of the ſucceſs that attended the labours of thoſe illuſtrious characters of all ages and nations, who devoted their talents to the diſcovery and elucidation of truth.

and

and the powerful, who were not captivated by its allurements [*p*],) naturally ſtudied to paſs their lives in one continued round of luxurious enjoyment: the only reſtraint they impoſed on themſelves aroſe out of a deſire to avoid, at all times, ſuch an exceſſive or immoderate devotion to pleaſure as might generate diſeaſe, or tend in any other ſhape to narrow the capacity for future indulgence. INTROD. CHAP. I.

XXVI. The Academics, although they affected to be influenced by better and wiſer principles than thoſe of the Sceptics, yet entertained maxims of an equally lax and pernicious tendency with them. In fact, they ſubſcribed to the fundamental dogma on which the whole ſyſtem of ſceptic diſcipline was built, namely, that "nothing can be known or perceived with certainty, and therefore that every thing may be doubted of and queſtioned." The only diſtinction which they made was this, that whereas the ſceptics inſiſted that "nothing ſhould be aſſented to, but every thing made the ſubject of diſpute;" the Academics, on the contrary, contended that "we ought to acquieſce in all things which bear the appearance of truth, or which may be conſidered in the light of probabilities." But ſince the Academics were ever undetermined as to what conſtituted that ſort of probability to which they would have a wiſe man aſſent, their doctrine The Academics.

[*p*] The number of thoſe who embraced the Epicurean ſyſtem was every where ſo immenſely great, in the age to which we allude, that whole armies might have been formed of them. This is ſufficiently plain from Cicero alone, who, in various parts of his works, complains of the vaſt increaſe of the Epicurean ſect. Vid. *de Fin. Bonor. et Malorum*, lib. i. cap. vii. p. 2350. tom. viii. opp. lib. ii. cap. xiv. p. 2388. *Diſput. Tuſculan.* lib. v. cap. x. p. 2829. tom. viii. opp.; and many other places to the ſame purport.

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contributed, no leſs than that of the Sceptics, to render every thing vague and unſettled [q]. To make it, as they did, a matter of doubt and uncertainty, whether the gods exiſted or not; whether the ſoul was periſhable or immortal; whether virtue was preferable to vice, or vice to virtue;—was certainly nothing leſs than to undermine the chief and firmeſt ſupports of religion and morality. The philoſophy of the Academy was at one time ſo much neglected, as to be nearly loſt. Cicero revived it at Rome, not long before the coming of our Saviour [r]; and ſo much weight was attached to his example and authority, that it was ſoon embraced by all who aſpired to the chief honours of the ſtate [s].

XXVII.

[q] The manner of the Academics cannot be better illuſtrated than in the words of Cicero, who may be conſidered as the leader of the ſect. "Ea, quæ vis, explicabo (he is treating of death and the immortality of the ſoul) ut homunculus unus e multis, *probabilia conjectura ſequens*. Ultra enim quo progrediar, *quam ut veri videam ſimilia*, non habeo. Certa dicent ii, qui et percipi ea poſſe dicunt, et ſe ſapientes eſſe profitentur." *Tuſculan. Diſput.* lib. i. cap. ix. p. 2570.

[r] Multis etiam ſenſi mirabile videri, eam nobis potiſſimum probatam eſſe philoſophiam, *quæ lucem eriperet et quaſi noctem quamdam rebus offunderet, deſertæque diſciplinæ et jampridem relictæ* patrocinium nec opinatum a nobis eſſe ſuſceptum. Cicero *de Naturâ Deor.* lib. i. cap. iii. p. 2884. This paſſage of the Roman orator unfolds without diſguiſe the nature of the academical philoſophy, of which we ſee he openly avows himſelf the patron and reſtorer. He repeats this in cap. v. p. 2886.

[s] The philoſophy of the academy, inaſmuch as it inculcated the uncertainty of every thing, and encouraged a ſpirit for diſputation on all topics, contributed in an eminent degree to ſharpen the mental powers, and to ſtrengthen and improve thoſe faculties which give advantage in debate. It cannot, therefore, appear ſurpriſing to any one that at Rome, where every man's power may be ſaid to have been commenſurate with his eloquence, the example of Cicero ſhould have ſtimulated all thoſe who were ambitious of glory and

The Peripatetics.

XXVII. Within the other claſs of philoſophers, that is, of thoſe who manifeſted a reſpect for religion, the moſt diſtinguiſhed ſects were the Peripatetics founded by Ariſtotle, the Stoics, and the Platoniſts. The Peripatetics acknowledged the exiſtence of a God, and the obligations of morality; but, at the ſame time, their tenets were not of a character to inſpire a reverence for the one, or a love of the other. The Ariſtotelian doctrine gave to the deity an influence not much beyond that of the moving principle in a piece of mechaniſm: conſidering him, indeed, to be of an highly refined and exalted nature, happy in the contemplation of himſelf, but entirely unconſcious of what was paſſing here below; confined from all eternity to the celeſtial world, and inſtigating the operations of nature rather from neceſſity than volition or choice. In a god of this deſcription, differing but little from the deity of the Epicureans, there was ſurely nothing that could reaſonably excite either love, reſpect, or fear. We are unable to aſcertain, with any preciſion, what were the ſentiments of the Peripatetic philoſophers reſpecting the immortality of the ſoul [*t*]. Could the intereſts of religion or morality, we would aſk, be in any ſhape effectually promoted by teachers like theſe, who denied the

and honour, to the cultivation of that philoſophy, from which he profeſſed himſelf to have derived ſo much advantage.

[*t*] See what I have ſaid on this ſubject, in ſome notes to Cudworth's *Intellect. Syſtem*, tom. i. p. 66. 500. and tom. ii. p. 1171. See alſo a learned work of the celebrated Jeſuit Michael Morgues, which he entitled, *Plan Theologique du Pythagoriſme*, tom. i. let. ii. p. 75. where it is proved that the ſyſtem of Ariſtotle excluded the deity from all knowledge of, or interference with, human affairs.

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ſuperintendance of a divine Providence, and inſinuated, in no very obſcure terms, a diſbelief of the ſoul's future exiſtence?

The Stoics.

XXVIII. The deity had ſomewhat more of majeſty and influence aſſigned to him by the Stoics. They did not limit his functions merely to the regulating of the clouds, and the numbering of the ſtars; but conceived him to animate every part of the univerſe with his preſence, in the nature of a ſubtle, active, penetrating fire. They regarded his connection with matter, however, as the effect of neceſſity, and ſuppoſed his will to be ſubordinate to the immutable decrees of fate: hence it was impoſſible for him to be conſidered as the author either of rewards to the virtuous, or of puniſhment to the wicked. It is well known to the learned world, that this ſect denied the immortality of the ſoul, and thus deprived mankind of the ſtrongeſt incitement to a wiſe and virtuous courſe of life. Upon the whole, the moral diſcipline of the Stoics, although it might in ſome reſpects be founded on unexceptionable principles, the reſult of ſound reaſoning, may yet be compared to a body of a fair and impoſing external appearance, but which, on a cloſer examination, is found deſtitute of thoſe eſſential parts which alone can give it either energy or excellence [*u*].

The Platoniſts.

XXIX. Of all the philoſophers, Plato ſeems to have made the neareſt approach to the principles of true wiſdom; and there are certainly grounds for believing that his ſyſtem was not wholly unproductive of benefit to the human race. He

[*u*] The reader will find this illuſtrated by what I have remarked in my notes to Cudworth's *Intellectual Syſtem*, tom. i. p. 517, et ſeq.

conſidered

conſidered the deity, to whom he gave the ſupreme governance of the univerſe, as a being of the higheſt wiſdom and power, and totally unconnected with any material ſubſtance. The ſouls of men he conceived to proceed from this pre-eminent ſource; and, as partaking of its nature, to be incapable of death. He alſo gave the ſtrongeſt encouragement to virtue, and equally diſcountenanced vice, by holding out to mortals the proſpect of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. But even the ſyſtem of Plato had its defects. For, not to mention his frequent aſſumption of things without any ſort of proof, and the obſcure and enigmatical way in which he often expreſſes himſelf, he aſcribes to that power, whom he extols as the faſhioner and maker of the univerſe, few or none of the grander attributes, ſuch as infinity, immenſity, ubiquity, omnipotence, omniſcience; but ſuppoſes him to be confined within certain limits, and that the direction of human affairs was committed to a claſs of inferior ſpiritual agents, termed dæmons. This notion of miniſtering dæmons, and alſo thoſe points of doctrine which relate to the origin and condition of the human ſoul, greatly diſfigure the morality of Plato; ſince they manifeſtly tend to generate ſuperſtition, and to confirm men in the practice of worſhipping a number of inferior deities. His teaching, moreover, that the ſoul, during its continuance in the body, might be conſidered as it were in a ſtate of impriſonment, and that we ought to endeavour, by means of contemplation, to ſet it free, and reſtore it to an alliance with the divine nature, had an ill effect, inaſmuch as it prompted men of weak minds to withdraw every attention from the body and the concerns

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The Eclectics.

concerns of life, and to indulge in the dreams and fancies of a disordered imagination [*v*].

XXX. Since the little of good that presented itself in the tenets of any of these various sects was sullied and deformed by an abundant alloy of what was pernicious and absurd; and as it was found that no sort of harmony prevailed amongst philosophers of any description, even though they might profess one and the same system, but that they were constantly at variance either with themselves or with others; it occurred to some, who perhaps were more than ordinarily anxious in their pursuit after truth, that the most ready way of attaining their object would be to adopt neither of these systems in the whole, but to select from each of them such of its parts as were the most consonant with sound and unbiassed reason. Hence a new sect of philosophers sprang up, who, from the manner in which their system was formed, acquired the name of Eclectics. We are certain that it first appeared in Egypt, and particularly at Alexandria, but the name of its founder is lost in obscurity; for though one Potamon of Alexandria is commonly represented as such by ancient writers, it is by no means clear that this opinion of theirs is correct. However, we have sufficient authority for stating, (indeed it might be proved even from Philo Judæus

[*v*] The reader will find the objectionable points of the Platonic philosophy discussed in an eloquent and copious manner by Fra. Baltus, an ingenious Jesuit, in a work undertaken by him with a view to exonerate the early fathers from the charge of Platonism, and entitled, *Defense des Peres accusez de Platonisme*, Paris, 1711, 4to. His reprehension, however, is occasionally carried to an excess; and he is not always sufficiently attentive to the force and spirit of the Platonic opinions.

alone,)

alone,) that this ſect flouriſhed at Alexandria at the time of our Saviour's birth [*w*]. Thoſe who originated this ſpecies of philoſophy, took their leading principles from the ſyſtem of Plato; conſidering almoſt every thing which he had advanced reſpecting the Deity, the ſoul, the world, and the dæmons, as indiſputable axioms: on which account they were regarded by many as altogether Platoniſts. Indeed this title, ſo far from being diſclaimed, was rather affected by ſome of them, and particularly by thoſe who joined themſelves to Ammonius Sacca, another celebrated patron of the Eclectic philoſophy. With the doctrines of Plato, however, they very freely intermixed the moſt approved maxims of the Pythagoreans, the Stoics, the Peripatetics, and the oriental philoſophers; merely taking care to admit none that were in oppoſition to the tenets of their favourite guide and inſtructor [*x*]. INTROD. CHAP. I.

XXXI. The

[*w*] The writings of Philo Judæus are, in every reſpect, marked by the ſame ſpecies of philoſophy that characterizes thoſe of Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and other fathers of the Chriſtian church, who were confeſſedly Eclectics. He chiefly follows Plato, and on this account he is regarded by many in the light of a mere Platoniſt; but it would be difficult to make this opinion accord with the encomiums which we find him at times beſtowing on the Stoics, the Pythagoreans, and other philoſophers, and whoſe maxims and mode of expreſſion he adopts without reſerve. We ſhould rather, therefore, conſider him as belonging to thoſe who profeſſed themſelves to be of no particular ſect, but who made it their ſtudy to ſelect and appropriate to themſelves the moſt rational parts of every ſyſtem. Mangey, the learned Engliſh editor of Philo's works, did not overlook this, though he ſuffered ſo many things elſe to eſcape him, but remarks in the preface, p. viii. that his author ought to be claſſed with the Eclectics.

[*x*] Juſtin Martyr mentions, (*Dial. cum Tryphon.* ſect. 2. p. 103. opp. edit. Benedict.) amongſt other philoſophic ſects of his time, that of the Theoretics, which he conſiders

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The oriental philoſophy.

XXXI. The documents that have hitherto come to light relating to the oriental philoſophy are ſo few, that our knowledge of it is of neceſſity very limited. Some inſight, however, into its nature and principles may be obtained from what has been handed down to us reſpecting the tenets of ſeveral of the firſt Chriſtian ſects, and from a few other ſcattered relics of it, that may be collected here and there. Its author, who is unknown, perceiving that in almoſt every thing which comes under our obſervation there is a manifeſt admixture of evil, and that human nature has an obvious leaning to what is criminal and vitious, whilſt, at the ſame time, reaſon forbids us to regard the Deity in any other light

as holding a middle place between the Peripatetics and the Pythagoreans. Langus, the tranſlator of Juſtin, imagines that he applied this denomination either to the Academics or the Sceptics, who aſſigned no bounds to their doubts and inquiries. This ſuggeſtion appears to me to carry ſome weight with it: but Prudentius Maranus, a Benedictine monk, who ſome time back publiſhed an edition of Juſtin, maintains a very different opinion, and aſſerts that by the term Theoretic was meant that ſpecies of philoſophy which diſregards action, and devotes itſelf entirely to contemplation. I do not think, however, that we can altogether rely on the judgment of this induſtrious good old man, whoſe accuracy of conception is not every where alike conſpicuous. Juſtin ſpeaks of the Theoretics as one of the ſects that flouriſhed at the time he wrote; but none of thoſe ſects, except the Academics, can be ſaid to have ſo far embraced the contemplative ſyſtem as to neglect laying down any rules for the conduct of active life. But is it not poſſible that the ſect which Juſtin terms the Theoretics might be one and the ſame with that of the Eclectics? There is certainly nothing in the name that militates againſt this ſuppoſition, ſince the term Theoretics might naturally enough be uſed to characterize a claſs of philoſophers who were continually prying with the moſt vigilant curioſity into the maxims and opinions of other ſects, and adopted none into their own ſyſtem but ſuch as had undergone a ſevere and penetrating ſcrutiny.

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than as the pure and unſullied fountain of good alone, was induced to ſeek for the origin of this calamitous ſtate of things in a different ſource [*y*]. But as he could diſcover nothing beſides God, to which this evil influence could be attributed, unleſs it were the matter of which the world, and the bodies of men, and all other living creatures are formed, he was led to regard this principle as the root and cauſe of every evil propenſity, and every untoward affection. The unavoidable conſequence of this opinion was, that matter ſhould be conſidered as ſelf-exiſtent, and as having exerciſed an influence entirely independent of the Deity from all eternity. But this propoſition impoſed on its abettors a taſk of no little difficulty, namely, that of explaining by what agency or means this originally rude undigeſted maſs of matter came to be ſo ſkilfully and aptly arranged in all its parts; how it happens that ſo many things of a refined and exalted nature are connected with it; and particularly, to account for the wonderful union of etherial ſpirits with ſupine and vitiated fleſhly bodies. It was found impoſſible to ſolve theſe

[*y*] The ancient fathers of the Chriſtian church, although they could form but a very imperfect judgment of the Gnoſtic ſyſtem, ſince they were unacquainted with its true origin and growth, yet plainly perceived that this ſpecies of philoſophy was founded on a wiſh to remove from the Deity every imputation of his being the cauſe or author of any thing evil. Tertullian ſays, (*de Præſcript. adverſ. Hæreticos*, cap. vii. p. 119. opp. edit. Venet.) "Eædem materiæ apud hæreticos et philoſophos volutantur, iidem retractatus implicantur: unde malum? et quare? et unde homo? et quomodo?" See alſo Epiphanius, hæreſ. xxiv. Baſilidianor, ſect. vi. p. 72. tom. i. opp.; and beyond all, that fragment of Valentine preſerved by Origen, *Dialog. contra Marcionitas*, ſect. iv. p. 85. ed. Wettſten. in which he points out with much perſpicuity the various ſteps by which he arrived at that form of religion of which his conſcience approved.

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points by any arguments drawn from nature or reaſon; recourſe was, therefore, had to the ſuggeſtions of a lively invention, and a fabulous ſort of theory was propounded, reſpecting the formation of the world, and that remarkable admixture of good and evil in every thing belonging to it, which ſo continually obtrudes itſelf on our notice. The Deity could not, conſiſtently with their views of him, be conſidered as the author of either; ſince it muſt have appeared incredible to thoſe who regarded the Supreme Being as purity and goodneſs itſelf, and utterly averſe from every thing of an oppoſite character, that he ſhould have employed himſelf in giving form and arrangement to a vitiated and diſtempered maſs, or have been anywiſe inſtrumental in aſſociating good with evil.

The oriental philoſophers divided into ſects.

XXXII. As none more readily diſagree among themſelves, than thoſe who pretend to reſolve the moſt abſtruſe and intricate points by the ſtrength of the human intellect alone, it will eaſily be conceived that thoſe who endeavoured to extricate themſelves from the difficulties above noticed, by the aſſiſtance of fiction, would of courſe run into a great diverſity of ſentiment. Thoſe of the moſt numerous claſs ſeem to have believed in the exiſtence of a being, whom they conſidered as the prince or power of darkneſs, upon whom the Prince of light (that is, the Deity himſelf) made war; and having obtained the victory, made matter the receptacle of the ſpoil and forces which he had taken from his opponent. Tales like this, of the wars carried on between a good and an evil power, were commonly adopted by all of this ſect; but they were far from being unanimous as to the nature of that prince of darkneſs, or matter, who was thus ſet in oppoſition to the Deity.

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By ſome, he was conſidered as of an equal nature with the Author of all good, and of neceſſity to have exiſted from all eternity; by others, he was thought to have been generated of matter, which they ſuppoſed to be endowed with both animation and fertility; whilſt others regarded him as the ſon of Eternal Light, the offspring of the Deity, who, unable to endure the controul of a ſuperior, had rebelled againſt the author of his exiſtence, and erected for himſelf a ſeparate and diſtinct eſtate. The opinion entertained by another ſect was, that matter was not ſubject to the dominion of a prince or ruler peculiar to itſelf, but that it was faſhioned and brought into order, and man created, by one of thoſe eternal ſpirits whom God begat of himſelf, and who acted not from deſign, but was ſtimulated to the undertaking by a ſudden accidental impulſe. This opinion alſo, when it came to be diſcuſſed and enlarged upon, gave riſe to much diſſenſion. Some contended that this architect or fabricator of the world acted with the conſent and approbation of the Deity; others denied this. Some ſuppoſed that, in the commencement of this undertaking, he was uninfluenced by any vitious principle; but that having accompliſhed his purpoſe, he gave himſelf over to iniquity, and, at the inſtigation of pride, withdrew men from the knowledge of the Supreme Deity. Others conceived him to have a natural and neceſſary inclination to what was evil; others imagined that he might be of a middle nature, ſomewhat between the two; and many eſteemed him to be a compound eſſence, made up of a certain proportion of good and evil. The ſentiments of a third ſect appear to have been formed on an union of thoſe of the two former. According to theſe, the world, and all things belonging to it, were

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were under the regulation and guidance of three powers, namely, the Supreme Deity, the prince of darkneſs and of matter, and the creator or maker of the world. I believe I may venture to ſay, that every one who ſhall attentively examine the opinions and maxims entertained by ſome of the Chriſtian ſects of the firſt century, will readily give his aſſent to the accuracy of this ſtatement. Of the firſt claſs we may account Simon Magus, Manes, and others; the principal leaders of the Gnoſtics may be ranked under the ſecond; and Marcion, with perhaps ſome others, may be conſidered as belonging to the third.

Certain tenets, however, common to them all reſpecting the deity.

XXXIII. Notwithſtanding that the various ſects of oriental philoſophers, who believed matter to be the cauſe of all evil, were ſo much divided in opinion as to the particular mode or form under which it ought to be conſidered as ſuch; there were yet ſome maxims, or points of doctrine, to which they all ſubſcribed without reſerve, and which may be regarded as the principles on which the ſyſtem in general was founded. In the firſt place, they were unanimous in maintaining that there had exiſted from all eternity a divine nature, replete with goodneſs, intelligence, wiſdom, and virtue, a light of the moſt pure and ſubtle kind diffuſed throughout all ſpace, of whom it was impoſſible for the mind of man to form an adequate conception. Thoſe who were converſant with the Greek language gave to this pre-eminent Being the title of βυθὸς, in alluſion to the vaſtneſs of his excellence, which they deemed it beyond the reach of human capacity to comprehend. The ſpace which he inhabits they named πλήρωμα, but occaſionally the term αἰὼν was applied to it. This divine nature, they imagined, having exiſted for ages in ſolitude and ſilence,

ſilence, at length, by the operation of his omnipotent will, begat of himſelf two minds or intelligences of a moſt excellent and exalted kind, one of either ſex. By theſe, others of a ſimilar nature were produced; and the faculty of propagating their kind being ſucceſſively communicated to all, a claſs of divine beings was in time generated, reſpecting whom no difference of opinion ſeems to have exiſted, except in regard to their number; ſome conceiving it to be more, others leſs. The nearer any of this celeſtial family ſtood in affinity to the one grand parent of all, the cloſer were they ſuppoſed to reſemble him in nature and perfection; the farther off they were removed, the leſs were they accounted to partake of his goodneſs, wiſdom, or any other attribute. Although every one of them had a beginning, yet they were all conceived to be immortal, and not liable to any change; on which account they were termed αἰῶνες, that is, immortal beings placed beyond the reach of temporal viciſſitudes or injuries [z]. It was not, however, imagined that

[z] Αἰὼν properly ſignifies indefinite or eternal duration, as oppoſed to that which is finite or temporal. It was, however, metonymically uſed for ſuch natures as are in themſelves unchangeable and immortal. That it was commonly applied in this ſenſe even by the Greek philoſophers, at the time of Chriſt's birth, is plain from Arrian, who uſes it to deſcribe a nature the reverſe of ours, ſuperior to frailty, and obnoxious to no viciſſitude: Οὐ γὰρ εἰμὶ Αἰὼν ἀλλ' ἄνθρωπος, μέρος τῶν πάντων ὡς ὥρα ἡμέρας, ἐνσῆναι με δεῖ ὡς τὴν ὥραν, καὶ παρελθεῖν ὡς ὥραν. Non ego natura ſum perennis et immutabilis (it was an error of the tranſlator to render it non ego ſum eternitas) ſed homo, pars hujus univerſitatis, quemadmodum hora pars eſt diei. Oportet me non ſecus ac horam exiſtere et occidere. *Diſſert. Epictetearum*, lib. ii. § 5. p. 179. edit. Holſtenii. There was, therefore, nothing ſtrange or unuſual in the application of the term αἰῶνες, by the Gnoſtics, to beings of a celeſtial nature, liable to neither accident nor

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that the vaſt extent of ſpace called πλήρωμα was occupied ſolely by theſe ſpirits of the firſt order: it was likewiſe ſuppoſed to contain a great number of inferior beings, the offspring of the αἰῶνες, and conſequently of divine deſcent, but who, on account of the many degrees that intervened between them and the firſt parent, were conſidered comparatively to poſſeſs but a very limited portion of wiſdom, knowledge, or power.

nor change. Indeed the term is uſed even by the ancient fathers of the purer claſs, to denote the angels in general, good as well as bad. The example of Manichæus the Perſian, who, according to Auguſtin, applied the denomination of Αἰῶνες (which Auguſtin renders into Latin by the word ſæcula) to celeſtial natures of the higher order, ſeems to prove that the term was adopted in much the ſame ſenſe by the followers of the oriental philoſophy in general, as well by thoſe who were not converſant with the Greek language as thoſe who were. Amongſt the commentators on Holy Writ are ſome of acknowledged erudition and ingenuity, who conceive that αἰὼν has a ſimilar ſignification in the writings of the New Teſtament. St. Paul deſcribes the Epheſians, before they were acquainted with the goſpel of Chriſt, to have walked κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος. In this paſſage, ἄρχων τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος, "the prince of thoſe powerful natures which belong to, or have their dwelling in the air," appears to be one and the ſame with him who is firſt ſpoken of as the Αἰὼν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου; and according to this expoſition, Αἰὼν muſt here unqueſtionably mean an immutable nature, a ſpirit or an angel of the higheſt claſs. Vid. Beauſobre's *Hiſtoire du Manichee*, tom. i. p. 574, 575.; as alſo his *Remarques ſur le Nouveau Teſtament*, tom. ii. p. 7, 8. Jerome and, as it ſhould ſeem, ſome others approved of this interpretation. Jo. Alb. Fabricius thinks that the ſame ſenſe may be given to the term in that paſſage of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, where God is ſaid by his Son to have made τοὺς αἰῶνας· δι' οὗ καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας ἐποίησεν. (I. 2.) Quo in loco, ſays he, per Αἰῶνας non abſurdum ſit intelligere angelos. *Codic. Apocryphi Nov. Teſt.* tom. i. p. 710. Of theſe interpretations, the firſt has certainly the appearance of being a juſt one; of the latter I cannot ſay quite ſo much.

XXXIV. Be-

Opinions of the oriental philoſophers reſpecting matter, the world, the ſeul, &c.

XXXIV. Beyond that vaſt expanſe refulgent with everlaſting light, which was conſidered as the immediate habitation of the Deity, and thoſe natures which had been generated from him, theſe philoſophers placed the ſeat of matter, where, according to them, it had lain from all eternity, a rude, undigeſted, opaque maſs, agitated by turbulent irregular motions of its own provoking, and nurturing, as in a ſeed-bed, the rudiments of vice, and every ſpecies of evil. In this ſtate it was found by a genius or celeſtial ſpirit of the higher order, who had been either driven from the abode of the Deity for ſome offence, or commiſſioned by him for the purpoſe, and who reduced it into order, and gave it that arrangement and faſhion which the univerſe now wears. Thoſe who ſpoke the Greek tongue were accuſtomed to refer to this creator of the world by the name of Demiurgus. Matter received its inhabitants, both men and other animals, from the ſame hand that had given to it diſpoſition and ſymmetry. Its native darkneſs was alſo illuminated by this creative ſpirit with a ray of celeſtial light, either ſecretly ſtolen, or imparted through the bounty of the Deity. He likewiſe communicated to the bodies he had formed, and which would otherwiſe have remained deſtitute of reaſon, and uninſtructed except in what relates to mere animal life, particles of the divine eſſence, or ſouls of a kindred nature to the Deity. When all things were thus completed, Demiurgus revolting againſt the great Firſt Cauſe of every thing, the all-wiſe and omnipotent God, aſſumed to himſelf the excluſive government of this new ſtate, which he apportioned out into provinces or diſtricts; beſtowing the adminiſtration and command over them on a number of genii or ſpirits of

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of inferior degree, who had been his aſſociates and aſſiſtants.

Their tenets reſpecting man.

XXXV. Man, therefore, whilſt he continued here below, was ſuppoſed to be compounded of two principles, acting in direct oppoſition to each other: 1ſt, a terreſtrial and corrupt or vitiated body; 2d, a ſoul partaking of the nature of the Deity, and derived from the region of purity and light. The ſoul or etherial part being, through its connection with the body, confined as it were within a priſon of matter, was conſtantly expoſed to the danger of becoming involved in ignorance, and acquiring every ſort of evil propenſity, from the impulſe and contagion of the vitiated maſs by which it was enveloped. But the Deity, touched with compaſſion for the hapleſs ſtate of thoſe captive minds, was ever anxious that the means of eſcaping from this darkneſs and bondage into liberty and light ſhould be extended to them, and had accordingly, at various times, ſent amongſt them teachers endowed with wiſdom, and filled with celeſtial light, who might communicate to them the principles of a true religion, and thus inſtruct them in the way by which deliverance was to be obtained from their wretched and forlorn ſtate. Demiurgus, however, with his aſſociates, unwilling to reſign any part of that dominion, of whoſe ſweets they were now become ſenſible, or to relinquiſh the divine honours which they had uſurped, ſet every engine at work to obſtruct and counteract theſe deſigns of the Deity; and not only tormented and ſlew the meſſengers of heaven, but endeavoured, through the means of ſuperſtition and ſenſual attractions, to root out and extinguiſh every ſpark of celeſtial truth. The minds that liſtened to the calls of the Deity, and who, having renounced obedience

to the uſurped authorities of this world, continued ſtedfaſt in the worſhip of the great firſt Parent, reſiſting the evil propenſities of the corporeal frame, and every incitement to illicit gratification, were ſuppoſed, on the diſſolution of their bodies, to be directly borne away pure, aerial, and diſengaged from every thing groſs or material, to the immediate reſidence of God himſelf; whilſt thoſe who, notwithſtanding the admonitions they received, had perſiſted in paying divine honours to him who was merely the fabricator of the world, and his aſſociates, worſhipping them as gods, and ſuffering themſelves to be enſlaved by the luſts and vicious impulſes to which they were expoſed from their alliance with matter, were denied the hope of exaltation after death, and could only expect to migrate into new bodies ſuited to their baſe, ſluggiſh, and degraded condition. When the grand work of ſetting free all theſe minds or ſouls, or, at leaſt, the greateſt part of them, and reſtoring them to that celeſtial country from whence they firſt proceeded, ſhould be accompliſhed, God, it was imagined, would diſſolve the fabric of this nether world; and having again confined matter, with all its contagious influence, within its original limits, would, throughout all ages to come, live and reign in conſummate glory, ſurrounded by kindred ſpirits, as he did before the foundation of the world.

Moral diſcipline of the oriental philoſophers.

XXXVI. The moral diſcipline deduced from this ſyſtem of philoſophy, by thoſe who embraced it, was by no means of an uniform caſt, but differed widely in its complexion, according to their various tempers and inclinations. Such, for inſtance, as were naturally of a moroſe, aſcetic diſpoſition, maintained that the great object of human

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humân concern ſhould be to invigorate the energies of the mind, and to quicken and refine its perceptions, by abſtracting it as much as poſſible from every thing groſs or ſenſual. The body, on the contrary, as the ſource of every depraved appetite, was, according to them, to be reduced and brought into ſubjection by hunger, thirſt, and every other ſpecies of mortification, and neither to be ſupported by fleſh or wine, nor indulged in any of thoſe gratifications to which it is naturally prone; in fact, a conſtant ſelf-denial was to be rigorouſly obſerved in every thing which might contribute either to the convenience or amœnity of this life; ſo that the material frame being thus by every means weakened and brought low, the celeſtial ſpirit might the more readily eſcape from its contagious influence, and regain its native liberty. Hence it was that the Manichæans, the Marcionites, the Encratites, and others, paſſed their lives in one continued courſe of auſterity and mortification. On the other hand, thoſe who were conſtitutionally inclined to voluptuouſneſs and vicious indulgence, found the means of accommodating the ſame principles to a mode of life that admitted of the free and uncontrouled gratification of all our deſires. The eſſence of piety and religion, they ſaid, conſiſted in a knowledge of the Supreme Deity, and the maintaining a mental intercourſe and aſſociation with him. Whoever had become an adept in theſe attainments, and had, from the habitual exerciſe of contemplation, acquired the power of keeping the mind abſtracted from every thing corporeal, was no longer to be conſidered as affected by, or anſwerable for, the impulſes and actions of the body, and conſequently could be under no neceſſity to controul its inclinations,

or

or reſiſt its propenſities. This accounts for the diſſolute and infamous lives led by the Carpocratians, and others, who aſſumed the liberty of doing whatever they might liſt; and maintained that the practice of virtue was not enjoined by the Deity, but impoſed on mankind by that power whom they regarded as the prince of this world, the maker of the univerſe [*a*].

XXXVII. The

[*a*] Clemens Alexandrinus clearly perceived this diſcordance of ſentiment amongſt the oriental ſects, and accordingly divides the heretics of his time into two claſſes; *viz.* ſuch as deemed every thing lawful for thoſe who maintained a communion with God, and ſuch as believed that man could innocently indulge himſelf in ſcarcely any thing. *Stromat.* lib. iii. cap. v. p. 529. The former placed no reſtraint whatever on their inclinations; the latter made it a point to reduce and afflict their bodies by every ſpecies of mortification and ſelf-denial. Slender indeed muſt be their acquaintance with the writings of antiquity, who would contend that all the followers of the Gnoſtic abſurdities are indiſcriminately repreſented by the Chriſtian fathers of the firſt century as men of reprobate and diſſolute lives. For ſo far from this being the caſe, the generality of them acknowledge, that not a few of that numerous claſs had, by their continence and auſterity of demeanor, acquired a reputation for ſanctity, and gained to themſelves the love and veneration of the multitude. That the greater part, however, of thoſe who affected the title of Gnoſtics boldly ſet all virtue at defiance, and polluted themſelves by every ſpecies of criminal exceſs, is manifeſt not only from the teſtimony of Chriſtian writers, but alſo from the accounts given of them by thoſe adverſaries of Chriſtianity, Plotinus the Platonic philoſopher and Porphyry. See the treatiſe of the former, *contra Gnoſticos*, cap. xv. p. 213, 214.; and of the latter, *de Abſtinentia*, lib. i. ſect. 42. p. 35. edit. Cantab. But not to enlarge more than is neceſſary on the ſubject, there are ſome ſtriking paſſages in the writings of the apoſtles, which evidently point to the two oppoſite ſyſtems of morals that were thus drawn from one and the ſame ſource. St. Paul (Col ii. 18, et ſeq.) mentions, amongſt the firſt corruptors of the Chriſtian religion, thoſe who neglected all care of the body, diſplaying in themſelves a great ſhew of ſanctity and wiſdom;

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Uſe of this chapter.

XXXVII. The inferences to be drawn from the ſtatement which has thus been given, of the wretched aſpect of the whole world at the time of the Son of God's appearance upon earth, muſt, it is preſumed, be ſufficiently obvious. To every one who ſhall peruſe it with a mind diſpoſed to be informed, I conceive it will be manifeſt, that ſuch was the hopeleſs and forlorn condition into which the human race had fallen at that period, that its recovery could only be effected by a divine inſtructor and guide, who might overthrow the ſtrong and widely extended dominion of ſuperſtition and impiety, and call back unhappy, loſt, and wandering man to the paths of wiſdom and virtue. But little or no aſſiſtance was to be expected from the efforts of man himſelf againſt theſe adverſaries; ſince we ſee that even thoſe mortals who were endowed with a ſuperior degree of intellectual power, and who occaſionally obtained a glimpſe of the true path, were yet unable to proceed in it, but again loſt themſelves in the mazes of error and uncertainty, and diſgraced what little they had acquired of ſound wiſdom, by an admixture of the moſt extravagant and abſurd opinions. I ſhould alſo hope, that from this view it will appear of what infinite advantages the Chriſtian religion hath been productive to the world, and its inhabitants; I mean not only in a ſpiritual ſenſe, by opening to us the road that leads to ſalvation and peace, but alſo in the many and vaſt improvements in government

wiſdom; whilſt St. Peter (2 Pet. ii. 1, et ſeq.) and St. Jude (in Epiſt.) notice, as belonging to the ſame claſs, men who were ſo impious and depraved as to maintain that the followers of Chriſt might freely give the rein to their paſſions, and with impunity obey the dictates of every corrupt inclination.

and

and civilization to which its influence gave riſe. Take away the influence which the Chriſtian religion has on the lives of men, and you at once extinguiſh the cauſe to which alone thoſe unſpeakable advantages which we enjoy over the nations of old can be fairly or juſtly attributed.

CHAP. II.

Of the civil and religious State of the Jewiſh Nation in particular, at the Time of Chriſt's Birth.

I. THE condition of the Jews, at the time of the Son of God's advent in the fleſh, was not much ſuperior to that of other nations. The reins of their government had been placed in the hands of a Stipendiary of Rome, called Herod, and ſurnamed the Great, (a title, by the bye, to which he could have no pretenſions, except from the magnitude of his vices,) who, inſtead of cheriſhing and protecting the people committed to his charge, appears to have made them ſenſible of his authority merely by oppreſſion and violence. Nature, indeed, had not denied him the talents requiſite for a lofty and brilliant courſe of public life; but ſuch was his ſuſpicious temper, ſo incredibly ferocious his cruelty, his devotion to luxury, pomp, and magnificence ſo madly extravagant, and ſo much beyond his means: in ſhort, ſo extenſive and enormous was the catalogue of his vices, that he was become an object of utter deteſtation to the afflicted people over whom he reigned, and whoſe ſubſtance he had exhauſted by the moſt vexatious and immoderate exactions. With a view to ſoften, in ſome degree, the aſperity of the hatred which he had thus

The Jewiſh nation governed by Herod the Great.

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thus drawn on himſelf, he pretended to adopt the religion of the Jews, and at a vaſt expence reſtored their temple, which through age had gone much to decay: but the effect of all this was deſtroyed by his ſtill conforming to the manners and habits of thoſe who worſhipped a plurality of gods; and ſo many things were countenanced in direct oppoſition to the Jewiſh religion, that the hypocriſy and inſincerity of the tyrant's profeſſions were too conſpicuous to admit of a doubt [*a*].

Sons and ſucceſſors of Herod.

II. On the death of this nefarious deſpot, the government of Paleſtine was divided by the emperor Auguſtus amongſt his three ſurviving ſons. Archelaus, the eldeſt, was appointed governor of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, under the title of ethnarch, though, by his conduct, he made it appear that the title of monarch would have better ſuited him. Antipas had Galilee and Peræa for his ſhare; whilſt Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, with ſome of the neighbouring territory, were aſſigned to Philip. The two latter, from their having a fourth part of the province allotted to each, were ſtyled tetrarchs. Archelaus, who inherited all the vices of his parent, with but few or none of his better qualities, completely exhauſted the patience of the Jews; and by a ſeries of the moſt injurious and oppreſſive

[*a*] For an ample illuſtration of theſe matters, we refer the reader to the Jewiſh hiſtorian Joſephus; and in addition to that author, he may conſult Baſnage, *Hiſtoire des Juifs*, tom. i. part i. p. 27, et ſeq. Norriſii *Coenotaphia Piſana*. Noldii *Hiſtoria Idumæa*, publiſhed by Havercamp, at the end of his edition of Joſephus, tom. ii. p. 333. 396. Cellarii *Hiſtoria Herodum*, which is the eleventh of his *Academical Diſſertations*, part i. p. 207. Prideaux's *Hiſtory of the Jews*. In a word, there has ſcarcely perhaps been any thing written on the ſubject of Jewiſh affairs, from whence he may not derive information.

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acts, drove them, in the tenth year of his reign, to lay their complaints before the emperor Auguſtus, who, having inquired into the matter, depoſed the ethnarch, and baniſhed him to Vienne in Gaul.

State of the Jews under the Roman government.

III. After the removal of Archelaus, the greater part of Paleſtine which had been under his government, was reduced by the Romans into the form of a province, and put under the ſuperintendance of a governor, who was ſubject to the controul of the preſident of Syria. This arrangement, it is probable, at firſt met with the ready concurrence of the Jews; who, on the death of Herod, had petitioned Auguſtus that the diſtinct regal form of government might no longer be continued to them, but their country be received under his own immediate protection, and treated as a part of the empire. The change, however, inſtead of producing an alleviation of miſery to this unhappy people, brought with it an intolerable increaſe of their calamities. To ſay nothing of the avarice and injuſtice of the governors, to which there was neither end nor limit, it proved a moſt diſguſting and inſufferable grievance to moſt of them who conſidered their nation as God's peculiar people, that they ſhould be obliged to pay tribute to a heathen, and an enemy of the true God, like Cæſar, and live in ſubjection to the worſhippers of falſe deities. The extortion, likewiſe, of the publicans, who after the Roman manner were entruſted with the collection of the revenue, and for whoſe continual and flagrant abuſes of authority it was ſeldom poſſible to obtain any ſort of redreſs, became a ſubject of infinite diſſatisfaction and complaint. In addition to all this, the conſtant preſence of their governors, ſurrounded as they were by an

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hoſt of foreign attendants of all deſcriptions, and protected by a Roman military guard, quartered with their eagles, and various other enſigns of ſuperſtition, in the heart of the holy city, kept the ſenſibility of the Jews continually on the rack, and excited in their minds a degree of indignation bordering on fury; ſince they conſidered their religion to be thereby diſgraced and inſulted, their holy places defiled, and in fact themſelves, with every thing they held ſacred, polluted and brought into contempt. To theſe cauſes are to be attributed the frequent tumults, factions, ſeditions, and murders, by which it is well known that theſe unfortunate people accelerated their own deſtruction.

The condition of the Jews who were under Philip and Antipas, the other ſons of Herod, was ſomewhat better; the ſevere puniſhment of Archelaus having taught his brothers to beware of irritating the feelings of their ſubjects by any ſimilarly exceſſive ſtretch or abuſe of authority.

Their high prieſts and ſanhedrim.

IV. If any remnant of liberty or happineſs could have been poſſeſſed by a people thus circumſtanced, it was effectually cut off by thoſe who held the ſecond place in the civil government under the Romans and the ſons of Herod, and who alſo had the ſupreme direction in every thing pertaining to religion, namely, the chief prieſts and the ſeventy elders, of whom the ſanhedrim or national council was compoſed. The chief prieſts, according to what is handed down to us of them by Joſephus, were the moſt abandoned of mortals, who had obtained that elevated rank either through the influence of money, or iniquitous pliability; and who ſhrank from no ſpecies of criminality that might ſerve to ſupport them in the poſſeſſion of an authority thus infamouſly

famouſly purchaſed. Since all of them perceived that no reliance could be placed on the permanency of their ſituation, it became an object of their firſt concern to accumulate, either by fraud or force, ſuch a quantity of wealth as might either enable them to gain the rulers of the ſtate over to their intereſt, and drive away all competitors, or elſe yield them, when deprived of their dignity, the means of living at their eaſe in private. The national council, or ſanhedrim, being compoſed of men who differed in opinion reſpecting ſome of the moſt important points of religion, nothing like a general harmony was to be found amongſt its members: on the contrary, having eſpouſed the principles of various ſects, they ſuffered themſelves to be led away by all the prejudice and animoſity of party; and were commonly more intent on the indulgence of private grudge, than ſtudious of advancing the cauſe of religion, or promoting the public welfare. A ſimilar depravity prevailed amongſt the ordinary prieſts, and the inferior miniſters of religion. The common people, inſtigated by the ſhocking examples thus held out to them by thoſe whom they were taught to conſider as their guides, ruſhed headlong into every ſpecies of vicious exceſs; and giving themſelves up to ſedition and rapine, appeared alike to defy the vengeance both of God and man [*b*]. INTROD. CHAP. II.

V. Two ſorts of religion flouriſhed at that time in Paleſtine, the Jewiſh and the Samaritan; and what added not a little to the calamities of the Hebrew nation, the followers of each of theſe regarded thoſe of the other perſuaſion with the The Jewiſh worſhip corrupt.

[*b*] See Joſephus *de Bell. Judaic.* lib. v. cap. xiii. ſect. 6. p. 362. edit. Havercamp.

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moſt virulent and implacable hatred, and mutually gave vent to their rancorous animoſity in the direſt curſes and imprecations. The nature of the Jewiſh religion may be collected from the books of the Old Teſtament; but at the time of our Saviour's appearance, it had loſt much of its original beauty and excellence, and was contaminated by errors of the moſt flagrant kind, that had crept in from various ſources. The public worſhip of God was indeed ſtill continued in the temple at Jeruſalem, with all the ceremonies which Moſes had preſcribed; and a vaſt concourſe of people never failed to aſſemble at the ſtated ſeaſons for celebrating thoſe ſolemn feſtivals which he had appointed; nor did the Romans ever interfere to prevent thoſe obſervances: in domeſtic life, likewiſe, the ordinances of the law were for the moſt part attended to and reſpected: but it is manifeſt, from the evidence brought forward by various learned writers, that even in the ſervice of the temple itſelf, numerous ceremonies and obſervances, drawn from the religious worſhip of heathen nations, had been introduced and blended with thoſe of divine inſtitution; and that, in addition to ſuperſtitions like theſe of a public nature, many erroneous principles, probably either brought from Babylon and Chaldea by the anceſtors of the people at their return from captivity, or adopted by the thoughtleſs multitude, in conformity to the example of their neighbours the Greeks, the Syrians, and the Egyptians, were cheriſhed and acted upon in private [c].

VI. The

[c] See Spencer's Treatiſe *de Ritibus et Inſtitutis Hebræorum a Gentium Uſu deſumptis, nullibi vero a Deo præceptis aut ordinatis*, which is the fourth in the laſt Cambridge

VI. The opinions and ſentiments of the Jews reſpecting the Supreme Deity and the divine nature, the celeſtial genii or miniſtering ſpirits of God, the evil angels or dæmons, the ſouls of men, the nature of our duties, and other ſubjects of a like kind, appear to have been far leſs extravagant, and formed on more rational grounds than thoſe of any other nation or people. Indeed it was ſcarcely poſſible that they ſhould altogether loſe ſight of that truth, in the knowledge of which their fathers had been inſtructed through an immediately divine communication; ſince it was commonly rendered habitual to them, even at a tender age, to be diligent in hearing, reading, and ſtudying the writings of Moſes and the prophets. In every place where any conſiderable number of Jews reſided, a ſacred edifice to which, deriving its name from the Greek, they gave the appellation of ſynagogue, was erected, in which it was cuſtomary for the people regularly to aſſemble, for the purpoſes of worſhipping God in prayer, and hearing the law publicly read and expounded. In moſt of the larger towns, there were alſo ſchools under the management of well-informed maſters, in which youth were taught the principles of religion, and alſo inſtructed in the liberal arts [*d*].

VII. Rational

bridge edition of his grand work, *de Legibus Ritualibus veterum Ebræorum*, tom. ii. p. 1089. See alſo Joh. Gothofred. Lakemacheri *Obſervationes Philolog.* lib. i. obſerv. ii. p. 17. where it is proved that the Jews adopted ſeveral of the rites of Bacchus from the Greeks. An account of the various private ſuperſtitions which the Jews had derived from foreign nations, and of which the number was not ſmall, may be found in moſt authors who have treated of the Jewiſh rites and manners.

[*d*] See Campeg. Vitringa *de Synagoga vetere*, lib. iii. cap. v. p. 667. and lib. i. cap. v. p. 133. cap. vii. p. 156.

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Wrong opinions entertained by the Jews reſpecting God and the angels.

VII. Rational and correct, however, as the Jews appear to have been in thoſe principles and ſentiments which they had derived from their ſacred code, they had yet gradually incorporated with them ſo large an admixture of what was falſe and abſurd, as nearly to deprive the truth of all its force and energy. The common opinion entertained by them reſpecting the nature of God was, unleſs I am much deceived, cloſely allied to the oriental doctrine of its not being abſolutely ſimple, but ſomewhat reſembling that of our light. To the prince of darkneſs, with his aſſociates and agents, they attributed an influence over the world and mankind of the moſt extenſive nature; ſo predominant, indeed, as ſcarcely to leave a ſuperior degree of power even with the Deity himſelf. Of various terrific conceits founded upon this notion, one of the chief was, that all the evils and calamities which befal the human race, were to be conſidered as originating with this prince of darkneſs and his miniſtering ſpirits, who had their dwelling in the air, and were ſcattered throughout every part of the univerſe. With a view, in ſome degree, to leſſen the fear that was very naturally produced by this idea, they were willing to perſuade themſelves that an art had been divinely communicated to mankind, of frightening and driving away theſe evil ſpirits, by the uſe of various ſorts of herbs, by repeating certain verſes, or by pronouncing the names of God, and of divers holy men; or, in other words, they were led to entertain a belief in the

Beſides whom, the reader may conſult thoſe other authors who have written concerning the ſynagogues, the ſchools, and the academies of the Jews, pointed out by Fabricius in his *Bibliographia Antiquaria*, and by Wolfius in his *Bibliotheca Hebraica*.

exiſtence

exiſtence of what is termed magic. All theſe opinions, and others of a kindred nature, were, as it ſhould ſeem, borrowed by the Jews from the doctrine of the Chaldæans and Perſians, amongſt whom their anceſtors had for a long while ſojourned in captivity. Their notions, alſo, and manner of reaſoning reſpecting the good genii, or miniſters of divine providence, were nearly of the ſame complexion with thoſe of the Babylonians and Chaldæans, as may clearly be perceived by any one who will compare the highly abſurd and irrational doctrines maintained by the modern deſcendants of the Magi, uſually ſtyled Guebres, as alſo by the Arabs, and other oriental nations, concerning the names, functions, ſtate, and claſſes of angels, with the ſentiments anciently entertained by the Jews on theſe ſubjects [*e*].

As alſo reſpecting the Meſſiah, the ſum of religion, and other matters.

VIII. The greateſt part of the Jewiſh nation were looking with the moſt eager deſire for the appearance of the deliverer, promiſed by God to their fathers; but their hopes were not directed to ſuch an one as the Scriptures deſcribed: they expected not a ſaviour of ſouls, but a ſtrenuous warlike leader, whoſe talents and proweſs might recover for them their civil liberty [*f*]. Concerning

[*e*] See *Obſervationes ad Jamblichum de Myſteriis Ægyptior. a Thom. Gale*, p. 206.; alſo what is ſaid on this ſubject by Sale, in the Preface to his Engliſh tranſlation of the *Koran*. Even Joſephus himſelf hints in no very obſcure manner, though with ſome caution, that the intercourſe with the Babylonians had proved highly detrimental to the ancient religion of the Jews. See his *Antiquitates Judaic.* lib. iii. cap. vii. ſect. 2. p. 140.

[*f*] Baſnage in his *Hiſtoire de Juifs*, tom. v. cap. x. p. 193. treats particularly of the notions which, about the time of our Saviour's coming, were entertained by the Jews reſpecting the Meſſiah. Some very learned men of our own time have conſidered it as a matter of doubt, whether the

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cerning the reign of this prince here on earth, which it was imagined would laſt for the term of a thouſand

Jews in general looked for a Meſſiah, or whether the expectation was not cheriſhed by merely a part of them: and there are thoſe who maintain, that the Phariſees alone are repreſented in the writings of the New Teſtament as looking for a prince or deliverer; and would hence conclude, that the Sadducees entertained no ſuch hope. But not to ſay any worſe of this opinion, it appears to me to favour highly of temerity. I cannot indeed pretend to determine what might be the ſentiments of the Eſſenes, who differed in ſo many reſpects from the regular Jews, that they can only be conſidered as half Jews; but I think it is manifeſt beyond all doubt, that all the reſt of the Hebrews who dwelt in Paleſtine, and the neighbouring regions, fully expected the coming of a Meſſiah. Numberleſs paſſages might be cited, which place it out of all controverſy that this conſolatory hope was generally cheriſhed in the minds of the people at large, (ſee particularly Joh. x. 24, et ſeq. xii. 34. Matth. xxi. 9.); and that not only the Phariſees, but alſo the Sadducees entertained a ſimilar expectation muſt, I think, readily be admitted by every one, if it be conſidered that the ſanhedrim, or general council of the nation, together with all the doctors and interpreters of the law, and alſo the whole of the prieſthood, evidently looked for the coming of the Chriſt. The national council, as appears from the authority of Scripture itſelf, was compoſed of Sadducees as well as Phariſees; and the various orders of prieſts were made up indiſcriminately of thoſe of either ſect. If, therefore, it can be aſcertained that the whole of the ſanhedrim, together with all the prieſts and doctors, both wiſhed for and expected a Meſſiah, nothing further can be requiſite to prove that the ſentiments of the Sadducees were ſimilar to thoſe of the Phariſees on this point. And that ſuch was actually the caſe, admits not of the leaſt ground for diſpute. Herod the Great, alarmed by the coming of the Magi or wiſe men from the Eaſt, commanded the prieſts and interpreters of the ſacred volume to aſſemble, and inquired of them concerning the country in which the Meſſiah would be born. This general aſſembly of all the learned of the nation, amongſt whom were undoubtedly many of the Sadducees, with one accord replied, that, according to the prediction of the holy prophets, the deliverer of the people would be born in Bethlehem. Matth. ii. 4, 5, 6. Not a

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a thouſand years, as alſo of the profuſion of pleaſures and luxuries with which it would be attended,

ſingle individual of them, therefore, appears to have entertained the leaſt doubt of the coming of a Meſſiah. When John began to execute the divine commiſſion with which he was charged, of baptizing with water, the council at Jeruſalem ſent meſſengers to inquire of him whether he were the Meſſiah or Chriſt. Joh. i. 20. 25. It is evident, therefore, that this council muſt have been unanimous in the expectation of a Meſſiah. Caiaphas the high prieſt, the preſident of the Jewiſh council, required of our Saviour, under the moſt ſolemn adjuration, to ſay whether or not he were the Meſſiah: and when Jeſus anſwered in the affirmative, that pontiff at once accuſed him of direct blaſphemy, and demanded of the members of the council what puniſhment ought to be inflicted on him? who all without exception replied, that a man who could be guilty of ſuch impiety was deſerving of death. Matth. xxvi. 63, et ſeq. The whole council, therefore, we ſee were of opinion, that for a man to call himſelf the Son of God, or the Meſſiah, was an inſult to the Divine Majeſty, and merited nothing ſhort of capital puniſhment. But with what propriety, and on what grounds could ſuch a judgment have been with one voice pronounced by this aſſembly, which comprehended many of the Sadducees, if it was their belief that the notions entertained by the people reſpecting a Meſſiah had no ſolid foundation, but ought to be regarded in the light of a fabulous deluſion? Could a man be ſaid to have offered a ſerious affront to God, by merely endeavouring to give to a popular whim or idle conceit of the vulgar a turn in his own favour? But how, it has been aſked by ſome of the learned, could it be poſſible for the Sadducees to feel any ſort of intereſt in the coming of a Meſſiah, when, as is well known, they never extended their views of happineſs beyond the preſent life, and abſolutely denied the doctrine of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments? The anſwer is eaſy. It was indeed impoſſible for the Sadducees, conſiſtently with the tenets of their ſect, to entertain any expectation of the coming of ſuch a Meſſiah as God had promiſed, a ſpiritual deliverer, a redeemer of ſouls; but nothing could be more natural than for men like them, who maintained that obedience to the law of God would be rewarded in no other way than

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attended, of his wars with a terrible adverſary, to whom they gave the name of Antichriſt, and finally of his victories and their conſequences, many wonderful tales were related; ſome of which were afterwards adopted by the Chriſtians. With the exception of merely a few of the better inſtructed, the whole nation may be ſaid to have conſidered the ſum and ſubſtance of religion as conſiſting entirely in an obſervance of the ceremonies preſcribed by Moſes, to which they attached ſo high a portion of merit, as to believe that every one who conſtantly and ſtrictly conformed to them might, with a degree of certainty, look forward to the enjoyment of the bleſſings of divine favour, both in this life and that which is to come. To the calls of humanity and philanthropy the Jews paid not the leaſt attention, except in regard to thoſe who were allied to them by nature and blood, or were at leaſt ſo far connected with them as to belong to the ſame religious community with themſelves. They were even ſo wholly deſtitute of every generous feeling or ſentiment towards ſtrangers, as not only to ſhun, by every means in their power, whatever might lead to any thing like an intimacy, or reciprocal interchange of good offices with them, but alſo to imagine themſelves at liberty to treat them on all occaſions in the moſt injurious and oppreſſive manner. It was, therefore, not without reaſon that they were taxed by

than by an abundance of this world's goods, health of body, riches, and the like, to look with eagerneſs after ſuch a Meſſiah as was the object of the ardent hope of the Jewiſh nation at that period, namely, an illuſtrious prince, a hero, or vanquiſher of the Romans, and a reſtorer of their loſt liberties.

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the Greeks and Romans with cheriſhing an hatred of the human race [g].

IX. Among the various untoward circumſtances which conſpired to undermine the welfare of the Jewiſh nation, one of the chief was that, thoſe who poſſeſſed a ſuperior degree of learning, and who arrogantly pretended to the moſt perfect knowledge of divine matters, ſo far from being united in ſentiment, were divided into various ſects, widely differing in opinion from each other, not only on ſubjects of ſmaller moment, but alſo on thoſe points which conſtitute the very eſſence of religion itſelf. Of the Phariſees and the Sadducees, which were the two moſt diſtinguiſhed of theſe ſects both in number and reſpectability, mention is made in the writings of the New Teſtament. Joſephus, Philo, and others ſpeak of a third ſect, under the title of the Eſſenes [b]; and it

[g] See the authorities collected by Elſner, (*Obſervation. Sacr. in Nov. Teſt.* tom. ii. p. 274.) to which, if it were neceſſary, many others might be added.

[b] It is certain that no expreſs mention is made of the Eſſenes, in the writings of the New Teſtament: ſeveral learned perſons, however, have imagined, that although the name is not to be found there, yet that the principles and doctrines of this ſect are glanced at in various paſſages. Some, for inſtance, point to Col. ii. 18, et ſeq.; others to Matth. vi. 16.; whilſt others again fancy that a ſimilar alluſion is to be perceived in ſeveral other places. It cannot be neceſſary to enter into a ſerious refutation of theſe opinions, ſince they have no other ſupport than that of mere random conjecture. From this ſilence of the ſacred writings reſpecting the Eſſenes, (or, as ſome perhaps would prefer to have them called, Eſſees,) the adverſaries of religion have taken occaſion to inſinuate that Chriſt himſelf belonged to this ſect, and was deſirous of propagating its diſcipline and doctrines in the cities, in oppoſition to the wiſhes of the Phariſees and Sadducees. See Prideaux's *Hiſtoire des Juifs*, tom. iv. p. 116. But the opinion is manifeſtly childiſh and abſurd in itſelf; and nothing more is required than a compariſon

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it appears from more than one authority, that ſeveral others of leſs note contributed ſtill farther to diſtract the public mind. St. Matthew, in his Hiſtory, notices the Herodians; a claſs of men who, it ſeems highly probable, had eſpouſed the cauſe of the deſcendants of Herod the Great, and contended that they had been unjuſtly deprived of the greater part of Paleſtine by the Romans. In Joſephus we alſo find mention made of another ſect, bearing the title of the Philoſophers; com-

pariſon of the diſcipline of the Eſſenes with that of the Chriſtians, to prove it at once utterly falſe and void of foundation. Others, influenced by leſs hoſtile motives, have ſuggeſted as a reaſon why Chriſt and his apoſtles forbore to caſt any reprehenſion on the Eſſenes, that notwithſtanding all their proneneſs to ſuperſtition, they might probably appear to be actuated by a rectitude of intention, and a ſincere deſire to worſhip God aright. Finally, there are ſome who imagine that the Eſſenes without heſitation embraced the truth propounded to them by Chriſt, and became his diſciples; and conſequently exempted themſelves from the cenſure to which they would otherwiſe have been expoſed. But it appears to me, that no one who will be at the pains attentively to examine the principles and tenets of the Eſſenes, and to compare them with the hiſtory of Chriſtian affairs, can well accede to either of theſe opinions. At the ſame time, I conceive, that without going any farther than to the manners and habits of this ſect, we may be furniſhed with a moſt plain and ſatisfactory reaſon why no mention is made of it either by the evangeliſts, or any other of the apoſtles. Thoſe four hiſtorians of the life and actions of Chriſt, whom we term evangeliſts, confined their narration to ſuch things alone as were ſaid and done by him in the Jewiſh cities and towns, and particularly at Jeruſalem. In like manner, the epiſtles written by the apoſtles were addreſſed only to Chriſtians who dwelt in cities. But the Eſſenes, it is well known, avoided all intercourſe whatever with cities, and ſpent their lives in wilds and deſert places. It would therefore have been altogether digreſſive, and out of place, had any notice been taken, in either of the books of the New Teſtament, of any diſputes which either Chriſt or his diſciples might have had with a ſect of this deſcription.

poſed

poſed of men of the moſt ferocious character, and founded by Judas a Galilean, a ſtrenuous and undaunted aſſerter of the liberties of the Jewiſh nation, who maintained that the Hebrews ought to render obedience to none but God alone [*i*]. In fine, I do not think that the accounts given of the Jewiſh ſects or factions by Epiphanius and Hegeſippus, as preſerved in Euſebius, ſhould be conſidered as altogether groundleſs and undeſerving of credit [*k*].

X. The

[*i*] Joſephus *Antiquit. Judaic.* lib. xviii. cap. ii.

[*k*] In ſupport of the opinion which I thus profeſs myſelf to entertain, that what Epiphanius has recorded concerning the Jewiſh ſects, in the Preface to his book *de Hæreſibus*, is probably not wholly fictitious, or unworthy of credit, I will here bring forward a conjecture, which I have never turned in my mind without feeling ſtrongly perſuaded of its probability, and that it might with propriety be ſubmitted to the conſideration of the learned. Poſſibly it may contribute towards diſpelling a portion of that obſcurity with which ancient hiſtory is enveloped. Amongſt the various Jewiſh ſects enumerated by Epiphanius, is that of the Hemerobaptiſts, a ſet of people who, according to him, were accuſtomed to waſh their bodies daily, imagining that without this perpetual ablution, it would be impoſſible for any one to obtain ſalvation. Now mention is made of this ſame ſect by Hegeſippus, a very ancient writer, *apud Euſeb. Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iv. cap. xxii. p. 143.; and Juſtin Martyr alſo notices it, *Dialog. cum Tryphon.* p. 245. ed. Jebb. merely with this difference, that reſcinding the firſt part of the word, he terms the ſect Baptiſts. In the *Indicalum Hæreſeon*, a work which is commonly attributed to Jerome, it is likewiſe reckoned as one of the Jewiſh ſects. The author of thoſe tracts, which bear the name of *Clementina*, ſays that one John was the founder of this ſect, and that he had under him a company of twelve apoſtles, beſides thirty other ſelect aſſociates. *Homil. ſecund.* cap. xxiii. p. 633. tom. i. *Patr. Apoſtol.* The ſame thing is alſo ſaid in the *Epitome Geſtorum Petri*, which is ſubjoined to the *Clementina*, § xxvi. p. 763. If any reliance whatever, therefore, is to be placed in ancient hiſtory, the fact ſeems to be incontrovertibly eſtabliſhed by evidence that admits of no ſuſpicion

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X. The Phariſees, the Sadducees, and the Eſſenes, the three moſt diſtinguiſhed and powerful

Of the larger ſects, their points of concord and diſagreement.

picion either on the ground of deceit or ignorance, that ſuch a ſect as that of the Hemerobaptiſts did in reality exiſt amongſt the Jews; and we ſhould conſequently do wrong in conſidering every thing recorded by Epiphanius as fabulous, and undeſerving of credit. But what appears to me to be by no means an improbable conjecture is, that ſome of the deſcendants of theſe Hemerobaptiſts have ſurvived even to this day. The learned well know that there exiſts in Perſia and India a very numerous and widely extended claſs of men, who call themſelves Mendai Ijahi, or the diſciples of John; but who, from their appearing to have received a tincture of Chriſtianity, although but in a very ſlight and imperfect degree, are moſt commonly ſtyled by Europeans, "the Chriſtians of St. John." The Orientals give them the name of Sabbi or Sabiin. Ignatius a Jeſu, a Carmelite, who reſided for a long while amongſt theſe people, publiſhed an account of them in a particular little work, bearing the following title: *Narratio Originis Rituum et Errorum Chriſtianorum S. Johannis; cui adjungitur Diſcurſus per Modum Dialogi, in quo confutantur* xxxiii *Errores ejuſdem Nationis*, Romæ, 1652, in 8vo. The book is not to be deſpiſed, ſince it contains many things well worthy of attention; but it is deficient in method, and is evidently the production of an untutored genius. Beſides what is to be met with in this author, copious accounts have been given of theſe people by Herbelot, in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis voce Sabi*, p. 726.; and Aſſeman, in the *Bibliotheca Oriental. Clement. Vatican;* as alſo by Thevenot and Tavernier, in the accounts of their travels; and Kæmpfer, in his *Amœnitates exotic. faſcic.* ii. cap. xi. p. 435, et ſeq.; and more recently by Fourmont, in the *Hiſtory of the Academy of Inſcriptions, &c. at Paris;* and others. Bayer alſo is known to have been engaged in a work expreſsly on this ſubject, and which it is probable that he had nearly, if not quite, completed at the time of his death. The origin and nature of this ſect have not been as yet ſatisfactorily determined. We have ſufficient proof before us at this day, that it cannot in any ſhape be referred to the Chriſtians; for the opinions which thoſe who belong to it entertain reſpecting Chriſt, are evidently ſuch only as have been accidentally imbibed from their intercourſe with the Chaldean Chriſtians; and they do not pay him any ſort of

ful of the Jewiſh ſects, were cordially united in ſentiment as to all thoſe fundamental points which

of adoration or worſhip. By moſt people they are conſidered as the deſcendants of the ancient Sabii, of whom frequent mention is made in the Mohammedan law, and in Maimonides. But their manners and tenets by no means accord with thoſe which are aſcribed to the Sabii: and in regard to the appellation of Sabii, which is given to them by the Mohammedans, no argument whatever can be drawn from it, ſince it is well known that this is a generic term, applied by the Arabs to all who are of a different religion from themſelves. For my own part, I ſhould rather conſider theſe Chriſtians of St. John as the deſcendants of the ancient Hemerobaptiſts, who appear to have flouriſhed in Judea about the time of our Saviour's birth; and I ground my opinion on the following reaſons: 1ſt, Theſe people profeſs themſelves to be Jews, and aſſert that their forefathers dwelt in Paleſtine, on the banks of the river Jordan; from whence, according to them, they were driven by the Mohammedans. This is of itſelf, I think, ſufficient to overturn the opinion of thoſe who would confound them with the Sabii. 2dly, They reſt their hopes of the remiſſion of ſins, and of ſalvation, on the frequent ablution of the body; an error by which the Hemerobaptiſts were principally diſtinguiſhed from other Jews. At this day, indeed, the diſciples of John, as they wiſh to be called, are waſhed in the river, according to ſolemn form by the prieſts, only once in the year; whereas the Hemerobaptiſts practiſed a daily ablution of the body: but it is ſtrongly impreſſed on the minds of all of them, that the oftener this ceremony is performed by any one, the more refined and holy he becomes; and they would, therefore, rejoice if it were poſſible for them to undergo the like ablution every month, or even every day. It is the avarice of the prieſts which alone prevents the frequent repetition of this ceremony: money being the only motive by which they can be ſtimulated to the exerciſe of the duties of their function. 3dly, The name of the founder of this ſect, as that of the Hemerobaptiſts, was John; from whom they pretend to have received a certain book, which is regarded as ſacred, and preſerved with the greateſt care. It is a common opinion that this John was the ſame with him who was the forerunner of Chriſt, and who is ſtyled in Scripture the Baptiſt; and hence many have been led to conclude, that the people who are ſtyled

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which conſtituted the baſis and chief ſupport of the Jewiſh religion. All of them, for inſtance, rejected with deteſtation the idea of a plurality of gods, and would acknowledge the exiſtence of but one almighty power, whom they regarded as the creator of the univerſe, and believed to be endowed with the moſt abſolute perfection and goodneſs. They were equally agreed in the

Sabii are the deſcendants of John the Baptiſt's diſciples. Ignatius a Jeſu, in particular, is of this opinion. See his work above mentioned, cap. ii. p. 13, et ſeq. But it is plain from the account which, even according to Ignatius himſelf, theſe people give of the founder of their ſect, that he muſt have been a perſon altogether different from the Baptiſt: for they will not admit that the John, whoſe memory they hold in ſuch reverence, ſuffered capital puniſhment under Herod; but maintain that he died according to the courſe of nature at a city of Perſia, named Sciuſter, and was buried near that place. They alſo relate of him, that he was married, and had four ſons. It cannot indeed be denied but that, in ſome few particulars, the account which they give of this their John correſponds with what is recorded in Holy Writ of John the Baptiſt; but it appears to me beyond all doubt, that theſe things, as well as the few facts of which they are in poſſeſſion reſpecting Chriſt, were adopted from the Chriſtians, with whom they ſojourned for a while, after their flight from the oppreſſion of the Mohammedans. Perceiving nothing in theſe things either contradictory or adverſe to their tenets, and being, through their extreme ignorance, utterly unqualified for examining into or controverting any points of which they might chance to be informed, they probably without heſitation received and propagated them as a part of their own ſyſtem. Of the degree of merit that may belong to this conjecture of mine, which I ſcruple not to ſay appears to me to have every probability on its ſide, the public will be better able to judge, when it ſhall be put in poſſeſſion of thoſe books which the Chriſtians of St. John hold ſacred, and particularly of that one which this ſect conſider to have been written by their venerated founder. Copies of theſe books were, a few years ſince, depoſited in the King of France's library; and it may therefore reaſonably be expected that, ere long, they will find their way into the hands of the learned.

opinion, that God had ſelected the Hebrews from amongſt the other nations of the earth as his peculiar people, and had bound them to himſelf by an unchangeable and everlaſting covenant. With the ſame unanimity they maintained that Moſes was the ambaſſador of heaven, and conſequently that the law promulgated by him was of divine original. It was alſo their general belief, that in the books of the Old Teſtament were to be found the means of obtaining ſalvation and happineſs; and that whatever principles or duties were therein laid down or inculcated, were to be received with reverence and implicitly conformed to. But an almoſt irreconcileable difference of opinion, and the moſt vehement diſputes, prevailed amongſt them reſpecting the original ſource or fountain from whence all religion was to be deduced. In addition to the written law, the Phariſees had recourſe to another, which had been received merely through oral tradition. This latter both the Sadducees and the Eſſenes rejected with contempt, as altogether ſpurious. The interpretation of the law yielded ſtill further ground for acrimonious contention. The Phariſees maintained that the law, as committed to writing by Moſes, and likewiſe every other part of the ſacred volume, had a twofold ſenſe or meaning; the one plain and obvious to every reader, the other abſtruſe and myſtical. The Sadducees, on the contrary, would admit of nothing beyond a ſimple interpretation of the words, according to their ſtrict literal ſenſe. The Eſſenes, or at leaſt the greater part of them, differing from both of theſe, conſidered the words of the law to poſſeſs no force or power whatever in themſelves, but merely to exhibit the ſhadows or images of celeſtial objects, of virtues, and of

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duties. So much diſſenſion and diſcord reſpecting the rule of religion, and the ſenſe in which the divine law ought to be underſtood, could not fail to produce a great diverſity in the forms of religious worſhip, and naturally tended to generate the moſt oppoſite and conflicting ſentiments on ſubjects of a divine nature [*l*].

Of the Phariſees.

XI. In point of numbers, riches, and power, the Phariſees far ſurpaſſed every other Jewiſh ſect; and ſince they conſtantly exhibited a great diſplay of religion, in an apparent zeal for the cultivation of piety and brotherly love, and by an affectation of ſuperior ſanctity in their opinions, their manners, and even in their dreſs, the influence which they poſſeſſed over the minds of the people was unbounded; inſomuch that they may almoſt be ſaid to have given what direction they pleaſed to public affairs. It is unqueſtionable, however, that the religion of the Phariſees was, for the moſt part, founded in conſummate hypocriſy; and that at the bottom they were generally the ſlaves of every vicious appetite, proud, arrogant, and avaricious, conſulting only the gratification of their luſts, even at the moment of their profeſſing themſelves to be engaged in the ſervice of their Maker [*m*]. Theſe odious features in the

[*l*] A collection of what had been written concerning theſe Jewiſh ſects, by Joſ. Scaliger, Druſius, and Serarius, three diſtinguiſhed authors, who, as it appears, differed in opinion as to many things connected with the ſubject, was publiſhed by Trigland in 2 vols. 4to. 1702, under the following title: *Trium Scriptorum illuſtrium de Judæorum Sectis Syntagma.* Since that time, Baſnage, Prideaux, and numberleſs other writers, have uſed their endeavours ſtill farther to elucidate the ſubject; but the attempt has not, in every caſe, been attended with equal ſucceſs.

[*m*] Joſephus, although himſelf a Phariſee, yet authoriſes this ſtatement. See what he ſays in his *Antiquitates Judaic.* lib. xvii. cap. iii.; and alſo in ſome other places.

character

character of the Phariſees cauſed them to be rebuked by our Saviour with the utmoſt ſeverity of reprehenſion; with more ſeverity, indeed, than he beſtowed even on the Sadducees, who, although they had departed widely from the genuine principles of religion, yet did not impoſe on mankind by a pretended ſanctity, or devote themſelves with inſatiable greedineſs to the acquiſition of honours and riches. The Phariſees conſidered the ſoul to be immortal. They alſo believed in the reſurrection of the body, and in a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. They admitted the free agency of man to a certain extent; but beyond this, they ſuppoſed his actions to be controuled by the decrees of fate. Theſe points of doctrine, however, ſeem not to have been underſtood or explained by all of this ſect in the ſame way; neither does it appear that any great pains were taken to define and aſcertain them with preciſion and accuracy, or to ſupport them by reaſoning and argument [*n*].

Of the Sadducees.

XII. The Sadducees fell greatly ſhort of the Phariſees in number as well as influence. This is eaſily to be accounted for, from the manners and principles of the ſect. Their leading tenet

[*n*] Even Joſephus, who muſt have been intimately acquainted with the tenets of the Phariſees, is very inconſiſtent with himſelf in the account which he gives of them, as may eaſily be perceived by any one who will compare together the different paſſages relating to them in his works. It would alſo prove a taſk of ſome difficulty to reconcile every thing which he ſays concerning the opinions of the Phariſees, with what is recorded of them in the writings of the New Teſtament. Such inconſiſtency and contradictions can ſcarcely be accounted for, otherwiſe than by concluding that a difference of ſentiment prevailed amongſt the Phariſees on various points; and that their opinions, ſo far from being fixed and determinate, were in many reſpects altogether vague and unſettled.

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was, that all our hopes and fears terminate with the preſent life; the ſoul being involved in one common fate with the body, and liable, like it, to periſh and be diſſipated. Upon this principle, it was very natural for them to maintain, that obedience to the law would be rewarded by God with length of days, and an acceſſion of the good things of this life, ſuch as honours and wealth; whilſt the violators of it would, in like manner, find their puniſhment in the temporary ſufferings and afflictions of the preſent day. But perſons impreſſed with this opinion could not poſſibly conſider any as the favourites or friends of Heaven but the fortunate and the happy; for the poor and the miſerable they could entertain no ſentiments of compaſſion: their hopes and their deſires muſt all have centred in a life of leiſure, of eaſe, and voluptuous gratification: and ſuch is exactly the character which Joſephus gives us of the Sadducees [o]. With a view, in ſome degree,

[o] According to Joſephus, the ſect of the Sadducees was of ſmall number, and compoſed entirely of men diſtinguiſhed for their opulence and proſperity. *Antiquit. Judaic.* lib. xviii. cap. i. § 4. p. 871. lib. xiii. cap. x. § 6. p. 663. He alſo repreſents thoſe belonging to it as entirely devoid of every ſentiment of benevolence and charity towards others; whereas the Phariſees, on the contrary, were ever ready to relieve the wants of the poor and the wretched. *De Bell. Judaic.* lib. ii. cap. viii. § 14. p. 166. It likewiſe appears, from his account of them, that they were ſtudious of paſſing their lives in one uninterrupted courſe of eaſe and pleaſure; inſomuch that it was with difficulty they could be prevailed on to undertake the duties of the magiſtracy, or any other public function. *Antiquit.* lib. xviii. cap. i. § 4. p. 871. They were alſo, it ſhould ſeem, decidedly hoſtile to the doctrine of fate and neceſſity; conſidering all men to enjoy the moſt ample freedom of action, *i. e.* the abſolute power of doing either good or evil, according to their choice. It would have yielded ſome gratification to the reader,

gree, to juſtify this ſyſtem, and caſt as it were a veil over its deformity, they denied that man had

reader, poſſibly, had Joſephus traced theſe diſtinguiſhing traits in the character of the Sadducees to their proper ſource; but on this part of the ſubject he is altogether ſilent. The deficiency, however, may, I think, be eaſily ſupplied; and I will therefore attempt it in a few words. Since the Sadducees believed that the law of Moſes was of divine original, they were unavoidably conſtrained to admit that God had promiſed rewards to the obedient, and threatened evil-doers with puniſhment. But as it made a part of their creed, that death put a final period to the exiſtence of the ſoul as well as the body, it became with them a neceſſary point of belief, that the remuneration beſtowed by God on the righteous would conſiſt of the good things and enjoyments of the preſent life; and that its temporal evils, ſuch as poverty, diſeaſe, ignominy, and the like, would conſtitute the puniſhment of the wicked. Now it ſtrikes me, that every thing which Joſephus has handed down to us reſpecting the Sadducees may readily be accounted for from this one principle: for under the influence of ſuch an opinion, they would neceſſarily conſider the man who abounded in wealth, and other means of worldly enjoyment, as upright and acceptable to God; whilſt the miſerable, the poor, the deſtitute, and the diſeaſed, muſt in like manner have been regarded by them in the light of ſinners, hateful in the ſight of their Maker. Perſons of ſlender or but moderate means, to ſay nothing of the afflicted, the indigent, and the naked, could have had no inducement whatever to join themſelves to men profeſſing ſuch ſentiments; and as the number of theſe has ever far exceeded that of the rich and the happy, it was impoſſible for this ſect to extend itſelf ſo as to become any way numerous. To the ſame ſource may likewiſe be referred that want of humanity, which they diſcovered towards the neceſſitous, and thoſe who had to ſtruggle with the ills of adverſe fortune: for ſince it was their belief, that every thing in this life went well with the righteous, and that adverſity was the lot only of the wicked, they were naturally led to conclude that the poor and the wretched muſt, by their crimes and offences, have diſpleaſed God, and drawn on themſelves the effects of his juſt indignation; and that to relieve the wants of thoſe who were at enmity with Heaven, or to attempt, by any means, to mitigate or ſoften down chaſtiſements in-

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had any natural propenſity to either good or evil; but inſiſted that he was left at perfect liberty to chooſe

ſiicted by the hand of the Almighty, would be acting in direct oppoſition to the dictates both of reaſon and religion. It is probable, therefore, that in the obſervance of a harſh and unfeeling carriage towards their unfortunate fellow mortals, they imagined themſelves to be actuated by motives of piety and a love towards God. Again, nothing could be more natural for men who conceived that the ſoul would not ſurvive the body, and that all thoſe who ſhould be found deſerving of the favour of Heaven would receive their reward in this world, than to devote themſelves to a life of eaſe and voluptuous gratification: for in vain, they might ſay, would God laviſh on his favourites riches and health, or any of the various other means of enjoyment, if he did not intend them to be uſed for the purpoſe of rendering the path of life ſmooth and delightful. According to their view of things, the pleaſures and gratifications placed by the bounty of Divine Providence within our reach, ought rather to be conſidered in the light of rewards which God beſtows on the juſt, by way of remuneration for the difficulties which they may encounter in the ſtudy of his law. Unleſs I am altogether miſtaken, our bleſſed Saviour, in that hiſtory of the rich man, (whether true or feigned, matters not,) which is recorded in St. Luke's Goſpel, cap. xvi. v. 19. hath given us a juſt picture of the manners and way of living of the Sadducees. Dives was a Jew, for he calls Abraham his father; but he was neither a Phariſee nor one of the Eſſenes, and we may therefore conclude him to have been a Sadducee. Indeed, our Saviour's narrative leaves us in no doubt as to this point: for the requeſt of Dives to Abraham is, that he would ſend Lazarus to his brethren, for the purpoſe of converting them to a belief in the ſoul's immortality, and in the certainty of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. It is plain, therefore, that during his life-time he had imagined that the ſoul would periſh with the body, and had treated with deriſion the doctrine maintained by the Phariſees reſpecting the happineſs or miſery of a future ſtate; and that the brethren whom he had left behind entertained ſimilar ſentiments,—ſentiments which clearly mark them as the votaries of that impious ſyſtem to which the Sadducees were devoted. This man is repreſented as having amaſſed great wealth. His riches were employed in obtaining for him authority and reſpect amongſt the people: for

chooſe between the two. A man's happineſs and proſperity, therefore, they aſſerted, depended entirely for the eyes of the multitude were ſtudiouſly drawn towards him, by the ſplendour and coſtlineſs of his apparel; and he fared ſumptuouſly and joyouſly with his companions every day. Lazarus, a poor wretch, the prey of miſery and diſeaſe, was ſuffered to lie languiſhing at his gate, neglected and ſcorned as a being hateful in the ſight of Heaven, and undeſerving of any commiſeration. The writings of Moſes and the prophets were not indeed rejected by him; on the contrary, it ſhould ſeem that he held them in reſpect. "They have Moſes and the prophets," ſays Abraham. The Holy Scriptures, therefore, it appears, were in the hands of theſe men; but they would not allow that any thing contained in them would warrant a concluſion that the ſouls of men would ſurvive the diſſolution of their bodies, and be either puniſhed or rewarded in a future ſtate for the deeds done in the fleſh. The authority, therefore, of Chriſt himſelf may be adduced in ſupport of the greater part of what Joſephus has handed down to us reſpecting the Sadducees. It was impoſſible for any thing to be more directly repugnant to the manners and opinions which we have juſt been conſidering, than the doctrine of the Phariſees, who maintained that there is in mankind a natural proneneſs or inclination to what is evil and vicious, and that conſequently great allowances ought to be made for the weakneſs and corruption of our nature: that many are involved in miſery, not ſo much through their own fault, as in compliance with the all-wiſe arrangements of Divine Providence, which freely diſpenſes both good and evil to its creatures, according to its will; whilſt the afflictions and ſufferings of others are evidently to be attributed to imprudence, to ignorance, to accident, or perhaps to the injuſtice and tyranny of wicked men. A man's fortune or circumſtances in life, therefore, they contended, could in no wiſe furniſh a juſt criterion whereby to eſtimate his uprightneſs or depravity. On every one of theſe points, the Sadducees differed from them *toto cælo*; inſiſting that man is endowed with the moſt perfect freedom of will to do either good or evil, without being under the leaſt controul whatever, from any impediment either external or internal; and that he is not driven by neceſſity, or inclined by natural propenſity, to either the one ſide or the other. The happineſs of mortals, therefore, being thus made wholly dependent on themſelves, if they

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entirely on himſelf; and hence if he were poor and miſerable, he was not deſerving of any commiſeration or pity, ſince his adverſe lot was altogether the conſequence of his own depravity and miſconduct.

Diviſion of the Eſſenes.

XIII. The Eſſenes are generally divided by the learned into two claſſes, the *practical*, and the *theoretical*. This arrangement of the ſect is founded on a ſuppoſition that the Therapeutæ, concerning whom Philo Judæus has left us a diſtinct little treatiſe, belonged to it. To this opinion I cannot implicitly ſubſcribe, ſince it has no other ſupport on its ſide than mere probability; but, at the ſame time, I do not pretend to ſay that it may not be a juſt one. Thoſe whom they call practical Eſſenes were ſuch as engaged in agriculture, or practiſed medicine, or any of the other arts, and did not eſtrange themſelves from the ſociety of mankind. The term theoretical they apply to thoſe who, renouncing every ſort of bodily occupation, devoted themſelves entirely to the exerciſe of contemplation; and who, to avoid pollution, withdrew themſelves from all converſe with men of a different perſuaſion. The practical Eſſenes were ſtill further divided, according to Joſephus, into two branches: the one being characteriſed by a life of celibacy, dedicated to the inſtruction and education of the children of others; whilſt the other thought it proper to marry, not with a view to ſenſual

fail to attain it, it muſt be entirely through their own fault. At this diſtance of time, it is impoſſible to enter more at large into the ſubject, or to relieve it altogether from the obſcurity with which it is enveloped; ſince we are ignorant of the manner in which the Sadducees might explain and recommend their ſyſtem, and are equally unacquainted with their mode of reaſoning, in anſwer to the arguments of their opponents.

gratification,

gratification, but for the purpoſe of propagating the human ſpecies [*p*]. It is poſſible that theſe might not be the only opinions and habits, by a difference in regard to which theſe two claſſes were diſtinguiſhed from each other. The monks of Chriſtianity, a deſcription of men that firſt appeared in Egypt, ſeem to have taken for their model the manners and ſcheme of life of the practical Eſſenes: indeed the account given us by Joſephus of the latter correſponds ſo exactly with the inſtitutions and habits of the early votaries of monachiſm, that it is impoſſible for any two things more nearly to reſemble each other. Thoſe ſolitary characters, who came to be diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of hermits, appear to have copied after the theoretical Eſſenes or Therapeutæ.

Of the practical Eſſenes.

XIV. The practical Eſſenes were diſtributed in the cities, and throughout the countries of Syria, Paleſtine, and Egypt. Their bond of aſſociation embraced not merely a community of tenets, and a ſimilarity of manners, and particular obſervances, like that of the Phariſees or the Sadducees; but extended alſo to a general participation of houſes, victuals, and every ſort of goods. Their demeanor was ſober and chaſte; and their mode of life was, in every other reſpect, made ſubject to the ſtricteſt regulations, and put under the ſuperintendance of governors, whom they appointed over themſelves. The whole of their time was devoted to labour, meditation, and prayer; and they were moſt diligently attentive to the calls of juſtice and humanity, and every moral duty. Like all other Jews, they believed

[*p*] Joſephus *de Bello Judaic.* lib. ii. cap. viii. ſect. 13. p. 165, et ſeq.

in

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in the unity of God: but from ſome of their inſtitutes, it appears that they entertained a reverence for the ſun; conſidering, probably, that grand luminary as a deity of an inferior order, or perhaps regarding him as the viſible image of the Supreme Being. The ſouls of men they imagined to have fallen, by a diſaſtrous fate, from the regions of purity and light into the bodies which they occupy; during their ſtay in which, they conſidered them to be confined as it were within the walls of a loathſome dungeon. For this reaſon, therefore, they would not believe in the reſurrection of the body; although it was their opinion that the ſoul would be rewarded or puniſhed in a life to come, according to its deſerts. They alſo allowed themſelves but little bodily nouriſhment or gratification, fearing leſt the immortal ſpirit might be thereby encumbered and weighed down. It was, moreover, their endeavour, by conſtant meditation, to withdraw the mind as much as poſſible from the contagious influence of the corrupt maſs, by which it was unhappily enveloped. The ceremonies or external forms, enjoined by Moſes to be obſerved in the worſhip of God, were utterly diſregarded by many of the Eſſenes; it being their opinion that the words of the law were to be underſtood in a myſterious recondite ſenſe, and not according to their literal meaning. Others of them, indeed, conformed ſo far as to offer ſacrifices; but they did this at home, ſince they were totally averſe from the rites which it was neceſſary for thoſe to obſerve, who made their offerings in the temple [q]. Upon the whole, I ſhould think it no

[q] Philo, in his book *Quod omnis Probus Liber*, p. 457. tom. ii. opp. edit. Anglic. denies that the Eſſenes offered

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no improbable conjecture, that the doctrine and diſcipline of the Eſſenes aroſe out of an endeavour to up any ſacrifices. Joſephus, however, in his *Antiquitates Judaic.* lib. xviii. cap. i. § v. p. 871. ſays, that they did not indeed ſacrifice in the temple at Jeruſalem; and for this plain reaſon, that the Jews would not permit them to do ſo, on account of their refuſing to obſerve the cuſtomary national ceremonies; but that, ſeparately, among themſelves, they offered up victims to the Supreme Being with more than ordinary ſolemnity. The learned are divided in opinion as to which of theſe accounts is moſt deſerving of credit. The generality of them lean to the authority of Philo, and propoſe, either by an emendation of the words of Joſephus, or by giving them a new interpretation, to make him ſay much the ſame thing with Philo: on which ſubject I have already taken occaſion to make ſome remarks, in my notes to Cudworth's *Diſcourſe concerning the true notion of the Lord's Supper.* I muſt confeſs that I ſee nothing which ſhould prevent us from conſidering both theſe accounts as ſupported, to a certain extent, by the real fact. For ſince it appears that the Eſſenes were ſo much divided in opinion reſpecting the marriage ſtate, as that ſome of them utterly diſapproved of entering into it, whilſt others freely took to themſelves wives; I think it by no means impoſſible that one part of this ſect might be wholly averſe from ſacrifices of any kind, and conſider the law from beginning to end merely in the light of an allegory, whilſt the remaining part, thinking that the words of the law ought in ſome ſort to be underſtood according to their literal ſenſe, might comply with them ſo far as to offer ſacrifices to God, although, in their manner of doing ſo, they might probably have a regard to ſome of the principles which they had imbibed from a different ſource. There are, however, ſome highly reſpectable literary characters, to whom it appears altogether incredible that any Jews, who believed in the divine original of the Moſaic law, ſhould have dared to ſacrifice in any other place than the temple; and who conſequently refuſe to place any faith in what Joſephus ſays of the Eſſenes having done ſo. But I rather think that I am furniſhed with the means of making theſe opponents of the Jewiſh hiſtorian alter their opinion, and of rendering them willing again to reſtore to him whatever they may have detracted from his credit and authority. The fact is, that I have met with a remarkable paſſage in Porphyry, the Platonic philoſopher,

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to make the principles of the Jewiſh religion accord with ſome tenets which they had imbibed from

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philoſopher, which has never, as far as I can diſcover, been noticed by any one who has treated of the Eſſenes, or undertaken to illuſtrate Joſephus; but which clearly vindicates the account of that hiſtorian from all ſuſpicion of error, and tends in great meaſure to remove the obſcurity which hangs over his narrative. Porphyry, in his treatiſe *de Abſtinentia a Carnibus Animalium*, lib. ii. § 26. p. 70. aſſigns a diſtinguiſhed place to the Eſſenes, amongſt thoſe whom he commends for abſtaining from the fleſh of victims. Καί τοι Σύρων μὲν Ἰουδαῖοι διὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς θυσίαν, ἔτι καὶ νῦν φησὶν ὁ Θεόφραστος ζωοθυοῦντες, εἰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἡμᾶς κελεύοιεν θύειν, ἀποσαίημεν ἄν τῆς πράξεως· ὑ γὰρ ἐσιώμενοι τῶν τυθέντων, ὁλοκαυτοῦντες δὲ ταῦτα νυκτὸς, καὶ κατ' αὐτῶν πολὺ μέλι καὶ οἶνον λείβοντες, ἀνήλισκον τὴν θυσίαν θᾶττον, ἵνα τῇ δεινῇ μὴ ὁ παγόπτης γένοιτο θεατής. Καὶ τοῦτο δρῶσι, νηστεύοντες τὰς ἀνὰ μέσον τάτε ἡμέρας, καὶ κατὰ πάντα τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον, ἅτε φιλόσοφοι τὸ γένος ὄντες, περὶ τὸ θεῖον μὲν ἀλλήλοις λαλοῦσι, τῆς δὲ νυκτὸς τῶν ἀστρῶν ποιοῦνται τὴν θεωρίαν, βλέποντες εἰς αὐτὰ καὶ διὰ τῶν εὐχῶν θεοκλυτοῦντες. Proinde Judæi qui Syriam incolunt, propter primum ſacrificiorum inſtitutum eo modo etiamnum animalia, ut ait Theophraſtus, ſacrificant: quo ſi nos juberent facere, a ritu immolandi deficeremus. Non enim victimas epulantur, ſed eas integras per noctem comburentes, multo melle et vino iis ſuperfuſo, ſacrificium ocyus conſumunt, ne qui omnia videt, facinus hoc intueatur. Hoc autem faciunt, diebus interjectis jejunantes, et per totum tempus, tamquam e philoſophorum erant genere, de numine colloquuntur: nocte etiam aſtra contemplantur, ea intuiti et precibus deum invocantes. It is true, that this paſſage does not refer to the Eſſenes by name; and it may, therefore, at firſt ſight, appear as if Porphyry and Theophraſtus, whom he quotes, were ſpeaking of the Jews at large. But the nature of the account itſelf thus given of them places it beyond a queſtion, that it was meant merely of ſome Jewiſh ſect, and indeed of none other than the ſect of the Eſſenes: for not a ſingle particular of what is thus related can be reconciled with the cuſtomary practice and uſages of the Jews in common; whereas the account correſponds, in every reſpect, with the inſtitutions and diſcipline of the Eſſenes. The Jews of whom it ſpeaks were philoſophers; they ſacrificed in the night; they did not feaſt on the things offered; they occupied themſelves in contemplating the ſtars; they revered the ſun; they poured out

from that ſyſtem, which we have above ſpoken of under the title of the oriental philoſophy.

XV. Not-

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out honey and wine on their ſacrifices; they conſumed the whole of what was offered with fire; and prepared themſelves for the performance of their ſacred rites by an abſtinence from food. Now nothing could be more foreign than all theſe things were from the religious obſervances of the Jews as a nation; whilſt, at the ſame time, they preciſely accord with the principles and practice of the Eſſenes. The fact, therefore, undoubtedly was as Joſephus repreſents it, that the Eſſenes did not bring their ſacrifices to the temple, but offered them up at home. It is alſo eaſy to perceive the reaſons on account of which the Jewiſh pontiff and prieſthood would not permit them to ſacrifice in the temple. The gifts, indeed, which they were accuſtomed to ſend to the temple, according to Joſephus, were not rejected, neither were its doors cloſed againſt them perſonally; but ſince they would not, in their ſacrifices, follow the inſtitutes and uſages of their forefathers, but introduced rites of a novel and profane nature, permiſſion to perform them in the temple was an indulgence which it was utterly impoſſible to grant. 1. It is well known that all Jews (*i. e.* who were ſuch in reality, and according to the ſtrict ſenſe of the term) were accuſtomed to feaſt ſolemnly on ſuch part of the victims as remained after ſacrifice. But this was an abomination in the eyes of the Eſſenes, who, according to the principles of the oriental philoſophy, conſidered the ſoul to be held in bondage by the body; and thinking it, therefore, improper to add more than was neceſſary to the ſtrength of the latter, ſupported it merely by a ſmall quantity of meagre food, and abſtained altogether from the fleſh of animals. 2. The Jews devoted only a part of the victim to the fire; but the Eſſenes burnt the whole of it with as much expedition as poſſible. 3. The Eſſenes poured out upon their burnt offerings an abundance of honey and wine; a practice entirely unknown to the Jews. The honey and wine were no doubt meant as viſible ſigns of certain thoughts or reflections, by which they deemed it proper that the minds of thoſe who were aſſiſting at the ſacrifice ſhould be occupied. 4. The Jews offered up their ſacrifices in the day-time; but the Eſſenes during the night. Porphyry gives us to underſtand, that they fixed on the night-time for performing theſe rites, "leſt this ungracious act ſhould meet the eyes of him who ſees every thing." This uſage was exactly conformable

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XV. Notwithſtanding that the practical Eſſenes were very much addicted to ſuperſtition, ſociety derived formable to a ſuperſtitious notion of the Eſſenes, of which Joſephus has taken notice. He who ſees all things, and to whoſe eyes the Eſſenes were unwilling that their ſacrifices ſhould be expoſed, was unqueſtionably the ſun, whom they worſhipped as the deity. But neither Porphyry nor Theophraſtus has hit upon the true reaſon why this preference was given to the night-time for ſacrificing. The author, who aſſigns the above reaſon for it, appears to have thought that the Eſſenes did not conſider ſacrifice as a thing altogether unlawful in itſelf, but yet regarded it as an uſage by no means pleaſing or acceptable to God; and that their offerings in this way were made rather in compliance with the cuſtom of their country, than in obedience to what they deemed to be his will. It being their opinion, therefore, that the offering of ſacrifice was an act not grateful in the ſight of Heaven, they always performed their ſacred rites before the riſing of the ſun, whom, in ſome way or other, they conſidered as holding the place of the Deity; being naturally deſirous to avoid doing that, which they imagined was not pleaſing to the God who ſees every thing, ſo immediately in his preſence as it muſt be during the day-time. But this reaſon was probably framed from the ſuggeſtions of the writer's own imagination, or elſe drawn from the principles of the more recent Platonic philoſophy, ſince it could have no foundation whatever in a knowledge of the tenets of the Eſſenes. It appears from Joſephus, that the Eſſenes believed the night to be a more ſacred ſeaſon than the day, and were, therefore, accuſtomed to perform all thoſe rites and ſervices, with which they imagined it behoved them to worſhip the Deity, before the appearance of the dawn. Thoughout the day, they conceived themſelves at liberty to diſcourſe of the buſineſs and concerns of this life; but during the night, they permitted themſelves to converſe only on ſubjects of a ſacred and divine nature. The chief part of the night was ſpent in contemplation; but before the approach of dawn, they recited their prayers and hymns. The day they devoted to labour. The circumſtance, therefore, of their ſacrificing in the night-time, inſtead of warranting the concluſion which Porphyry would draw from it, ſerves rather to prove that they conſidered the offering up of victims as an uſage of the moſt ſacred nature, and as conſtituting a neceſſary part of divine worſhip. The rule which the

derived no inconſiderable benefit from their labour, and the ſtrictneſs of their morals. Thoſe of the theoretical claſs, however, or the Thera- INTROD. CHAP. II.

the Eſſenes thus preſcribed to themſelves, of reſerving the night for the performance of their divine rites, and confining themſelves wholly to ſecular affairs during the day, appears to have excited ſome aſtoniſhment amongſt ſeveral of the learned, who conſider it as in no wiſe ſupported by reaſon. But if a proper opportunity offered itſelf, I could, without any very great pains, demonſtrate that this reverence for the night was founded on the principles of the ancient oriental doctrines, or that ſyſtem which comes more particularly under the denomination of the Egyptian philoſophy. Many of the oriental nations appear, from the earlieſt times, to have conſidered the night not only as having a claim to our preference beyond the day on the ſcore of antiquity, but alſo as being more dignified and ſacred. Indeed, they carried their veneration for the night ſo far, as almoſt to place it on a footing with the Deity himſelf. See the particulars which have, with much diligence and care, been collected by the eminently learned Paul Erneſt Jablonſky, on the ſubject of the night, and of the veneration in which it was held by the Greeks, Phœnicians, and Ægyptians, in his *Pantheon Ægyptiorum*, lib. i. cap. i. § 7, et ſeq. p. 10, et ſeq. It ſeems indeed extremely probable, that the Eſſenes might conſider the night as having ſome reſemblance to that vaſt unbounded ſpace in which, previouſly to the exiſtence of the world, of the ſun, and of time, the Deity, accompanied only by ſuch natures as were generated of himſelf, had from all eternity reigned in conſummate bliſs and glory. 5. It was the cuſtom of the Eſſenes to continue their ſacrifices for ſeveral ſucceſſive nights. The whole ſeaſon during which theſe obſervances laſted, was deemed particularly ſacred. They renounced, for the time, their uſual occupations, and employed each intervening day in ſubduing the body by faſting, ſo that it might not impede the vigour and operations of the mind. The nights were paſſed in contemplating the ſtars, which, without doubt, they believed to be animated and filled with a divine ſpirit. Differing, therefore, ſo eſſentially as the Eſſenes did in all theſe particulars from the Jewiſh diſcipline and law, it can afford matter for ſurpriſe to no one that the prieſts ſhould not have permitted them to offer their ſacrifices in the temple at Jeruſalem.

peutæ

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peutæ of Philo, ſeem to have ſet ſcarcely any bounds whatever to their ſilly extravagance. Although they profeſſed themſelves to be Jews, and were deſirous to be conſidered as the diſciples of Moſes, they were yet, if we except the name, and ſome few trifling obſervances, entirely ſtrangers to the Moſaic diſcipline [r]. Renouncing every

[r] On this ſubject I agree in opinion with thoſe who conſider the Therapeutæ of Philo to have been Jews both by birth and by name, although they materially differed from the bulk of that people in their ſentiments, their inſtitutions, and their manners. For Philo, to whom we are indebted for every information that we have reſpecting the Therapeutæ, and who was himſelf a Jew, expreſsly calls them Jews, and the diſciples of Moſes; and in addition to this, there are to be perceived in their cuſtoms and manners ſeveral peculiarities which ſavour ſtrongly of the Jewiſh diſcipline: and this opinion, from the ſtrength of the arguments by which it may be ſupported, is, I am convinced, daily gaining ground. There are, however, even at this day, not a few amongſt the learned who will not yield their aſſent to it; but I rather ſuſpect that their ſcruples and backwardneſs to be convinced may rather be attributed to prejudice or party attachment, than to any arguments by which the opinion can be oppoſed. In the firſt place, ſeveral of the dependents on the papal hierarchy, and alſo ſome Engliſh writers, perſiſt in giving the preference to the ancient opinion of Euſebius, who thought that the Therapeutæ muſt have been Chriſtians; and would fain avail themſelves of this, as a proof that the monaſtic mode of life was originated in Egypt amongſt the firſt inſtitutions of Chriſtianity. Bernard de Montfaucon, a moſt learned brother of the Benedictine order, having in the notes to his French tranſlation of Philo's treatiſe, *de Vita contemplativa*, publiſhed at Paris, 1709, in 8vo. undertaken to ſupport this opinion, it involved him in a controverſy with Jo. Bouhier, at that time preſident of the parliament of Dijon. The latter, a man equalled but by few in point of ingenuity and literary attainments, endeavoured, with great ſtrength of argument, to prove that the Therapeutæ were not Chriſtians; but the monk was not to be driven from his poſition: perceiving plainly that in yielding to his antagoniſt on this occaſion, he ſhould abandon a point of the utmoſt importance

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every ſort of employment, and all worldy goods, they withdrew themſelves into ſolitary places, and to himſelf and his fraternity, in eſtabliſhing the antiquity of monachiſm. The conteſt between theſe two eminent ſcholars was carried on amicably; and the correſpondence which took place on the occaſion was collected into an octavo volume, and publiſhed at Paris, in 1712, with this title, *Lettres pour et contre ſur la fameuſe Queſtion, ſi les ſolitaires appellez Therapeutes dont a parle Philon le Juif, etoient Chretiens.* A book of ſome ſize, in anſwer to Montfaucon on this ſubject, was likewiſe written by Giſbert Cuper, and of which mention is made in his *Letters*, publiſhed by Bayer, p. 63, 64. 70. 239. 241. 250. See alſo Reimari *Vita Fabricii*, p. 243, et ſeq.; but it was never publiſhed. Whilſt there ſhall be monks in the world, there will not be wanting men, who, in ſpite of the moſt forcible arguments to the contrary, will perſiſt in aſſigning to the Therapeutæ a place amongſt the earlieſt Chriſtians; as is plain from the recent example which we have had in Mich. le Quien, a brother of the Dominican order, who, although a man of conſiderable ingenuity and learning, has not heſitated to maintain (*Orient. Chriſtian.* tom. ii. p. 332.) that the Therapeutæ were of his fraternity. The attempt is awkwardly made, and ill ſupported; but it is evident that the good man was willing to ſubject himſelf to every ſort of contempt, rather than renounce the ſatisfaction which he and his brethren derived from their relationſhip to theſe ancient Aſcetics. So much the more praiſe, however, is due to Joſeph. Auguſt. Orſi, a copious and elegant writer, belonging to the ſame order of monks, but who has had the courage, even in the city of Rome itſelf, to contend that the Therapeutæ have no claim whatever to be conſidered as Chriſtians. See the *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory* written by him in Italian, vol. i. p. 77. Amongſt the Engliſh, Mangey, the editor of Philo, has prevailed on himſelf, (though confeſſedly with reluctance, and under the apprehenſion of exciting ill will,) to eſpouſe the oppoſite ſide of the queſtion to that which is the favourite one of his church. With the aſſiſtance of chronological calculation, he clearly demonſtrates that, at the time when Philo wrote his account of the Therapeutæ, Chriſtianity had not found its way into Egypt. *Præfat. in Opera Philonis*, p. 111. See alſo *Opera*, tom. ii. p. 471. In the next place, there are ſome diſtinguiſhed literary characters, though comparatively but few, who will not admit that the Therapeutæ

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and there diſtributed about in ſeparate cells, paſſed the remnant of their days without engaging in any

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Therapeutæ were either Jews or Chriſtians. The learned Jo. Joach. Langius publiſhed at Hall, in 1721, two diſſertations *de Therapeutis in Ægypto et Eſſæis*, in which he endeavours to make it appear that theſe Aſcetics were a Gentile philoſophic ſect, who had interwoven with their ſyſtem of diſcipline ſome few particulars drawn from the religion of the Jews. But the difference between this opinion and that of thoſe who conceive the Therapeutæ to have been Jews, is not ſo great as the learned author ſeems to have imagined: for, according to his own account, the diſcipline of this ſect appears to have been taken in part from the Jewiſh religion, and partly from ſome ſpecies of philoſophy; and exactly in this light is the ſyſtem of the Therapeutæ regarded by all thoſe who contend that they were Jews. Theſe diſſertations, therefore, have nothing in them of novelty, unleſs it be the author's refuſal to aſſent to the general opinion, that the Therapeutæ were Jews. On this point it is not neceſſary at preſent to enter into a diſcuſſion, although it might be very eaſily ſhewn that the opinion of this learned writer is deſtitute of every kind of ſupport; whilſt many circumſtances offer themſelves in favour of thoſe who maintain that the Therapeutæ were Jews, and that, not merely ſo far as regarded certain inſtitutions and tenets, but really and ſtrictly ſuch by birth and deſcent. Still further removed from the commonly received opinion is that of Paul. Erneſt. Jablonſky, a man eminent for his curious and recondite learning, who, in a treatiſe written profeſſedly on the ſubject, has attempted to prove that the Therapeutæ were prieſts of Egypt, who devoted themſelves to the obſervation of the ſtars, and thoſe other ſciences accounted ſacred in that country; in fact, that they were the ſame with thoſe whom Democritus, as cited by Clement, calls *Arpedonaptæ*. The outlines of his undertaking may be ſeen in his *Letters to Matur. Veiſſiere la Croze*, tom. i. p. 178, et ſeq.; and I truſt it will not be long ere the work itſelf is given to the public. As far as I am capable of forming a judgment of the matter, the learned author will have to encounter many obſtacles of no ſmall conſequence, and particularly, amongſt other things, that part of Philo's account which repreſents the Therapeutæ as not confined merely to Egypt, but as having eſtabliſhed themſelves in various other countries. In truth, he will have a vaſt deal to teach us, of which we

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any kind of bodily labour, and neither offering ſacrifices, nor obſerving any other external form of religious worſhip. In this ſtate of ſeclusion from the world and its concerns, they made it a point to reduce and keep the body low, by allowing it nothing beyond the moſt ſlender ſubſiſtence, and, as far as poſſible, to draw away and diſengage the ſoul from it by perpetual contemplation; ſo that the immortal ſpirit might, in defiance of its corporeal impriſonment, be kept conſtantly aſpiring after its native liberty and light, and be prepared, immediately on the diſſolution of the body, to re-aſcend to thoſe celeſtial regions from whence it originally ſprang. Conformably to the practice of the Jews, the Therapeutæ were accuſtomed to hold a ſolemn aſſembly every ſeventh day. On theſe occaſions, after hearing a ſermon from their præfect, and offering up their prayers, it was uſual for them to feaſt together,—if men can in any wiſe be ſaid to have feaſted, whoſe repaſt conſiſted merely of ſalt and bread and water. This ſort of refection was followed by a ſacred dance, which was continued throughout the whole night until the appearance of the dawn. At firſt, the men and the women danced in two ſeparate parties; but at length, their minds, according to their own account, kindling with a ſort of divine ecſtaſy, the two companies joined in one, mutually ſtriving, by various ſhouts and ſongs of the moſt vehement kind, accompanied with the moſt extravagant motions and geſticulations of the body, to manifeſt the fervid glow of that divine love with which they were inflamed. To ſo great an extent of folly

are as yet completely ignorant, before we can be brought to conſider the Therapeutæ as having been the prieſts or miniſters of the Egyptian deities.

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may men be led, in conſequence of their entertaining erroneous principles reſpecting the Deity, and the origin of the human ſoul!

The moral doctrine of theſe ſects.

XVI. Neither of theſe ſects, into which the Jewiſh people were divided, can be conſidered as having in the leaſt contributed towards promoting the intereſts of virtue and genuine piety.—The Phariſees, as was frequently objected to them by our bleſſed Saviour, paid no regard whatever to inward purity or ſanctity of mind, but ſtudied merely to attract the eyes of the multitude towards them, by an oſtentatious ſolemnity of carriage, and the moſt ſpecious external parade of piety and brotherly love. They were alſo continually ſtraining and perverting the moſt grand and important precepts of the divine law; whilſt, at the ſame time, they enforced an unreſerved obedience to ordinances which were merely the inſtitutions of men [*s*].—The Sadducees conſidered all thoſe as righteous who ſtrictly conformed themſelves to the obſervances preſcribed by Moſes, and did no injury to any of the Jewiſh nation, from whom they had received none. Since their tenets forbade men to look forward to a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, and placed the whole happineſs of man in riches and ſenſual gratification, they naturally tended to generate and encourage an inordinate cupidity of wealth, a brutal inſenſibility to the calls of compaſſion, and a variety of other vices equally pernicious and degrading to the human mind.—The Eſſenes laboured under the influence of a vain and depreſſing ſuperſtition; ſo that, whilſt they were ſcrupulouſly attentive to the demands of juſtice and equity in regard to others, they ap-

[*s*] Matth. xv. 9. xxiii. 13, et ſeq.

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pear to have altogether overlooked the duties which men owe to themſelves.—The Therapeutæ were a race who reſigned themſelves wholly to the dictates of the moſt egregious fanaticiſm and folly. They would engage in no ſort of buſineſs or employment on their own account, neither would they be inſtrumental in forwarding the intereſts of others. In a word, they ſeem to have conſidered themſelves as releaſed from every bond by which human ſociety is held together, and at liberty to act in direct oppoſition to nearly every principle of moral diſcipline [*t*].

XVII. Owing to the various cauſes which we have thus enumerated, the great maſs of the Jewiſh people were, at the time of Chriſt's birth, ſunk in the moſt profound ignorance as to divine matters; and the nation, for the moſt part, devoted to a flagitious and diſſolute courſe of life. That ſuch was the miſerable ſtate of degradation into which this highly favoured race had fallen, is inconteſtibly proved by the hiſtory of our Saviour's life, and the diſcourſes which he condeſcended to addreſs to them: and it was in alluſion thereto that he compares the teachers of the people to blind guides, who profeſſed to inſtruct others in a way with which they were totally unacquainted themſelves [*u*]; and the multitude to a flock of loſt ſheep, wandering without a ſhepherd [*v*]. Lives of the people diſſolute and perverſe.

XVIII. To all the ſources of error and corruption above pointed out, we have ſtill further to add, that, at the time of Chriſt's appearance, The oriental philoſophy adopted by many of the Jews.

[*t*] See what is ſaid by Barbeyrac, in the Preface to his French tranſlation of Puffendorf's *Jus Naturæ et Gentium*, § vii. p. xxv.

[*u*] Matth. xv. 14. Joh. ix. 39.

[*v*] Matth. x. 6. xv. 24.

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The oriental philoſophy adopted by many of the Jews.

many of the Jews had imbibed the principles of the oriental philoſophy reſpecting the origin of the world, and were much addicted to the ſtudy of a recondite ſort of learning derived from thence, to which they gave the name of *cabbala*, and which they conſidered as of great authority; attributing to it, in many reſpects, a ſuperiority over the plain and ſimple ſyſtem of diſcipline preſcribed by Moſes. Abundant proof of this might be adduced from the writings of the New Teſtament, as well as from the early hiſtory of Chriſtianity [*w*]. But to paſs over other facts which might be noticed, it is certain that the founders of ſeveral of the Gnoſtic ſects, all of whom, we know, were ſtudious to make the Chriſtian religion accommodate itſelf to the principles of the ancient oriental philoſophy, had been originally Jews, and exhibited in their tenets a ſtrange mixture of the doctrines of Moſes, Chriſt, and Zoroaſter. This is of itſelf ſufficient to prove that many of the Jews were, in no ſmall degree, attached to the opinions of the ancient Perſians and Chaldæans. Such of them as had adopted theſe irrational principles would not admit that the world was created by God, but ſubſtituted, in the place of the Deity, a celeſtial genius endowed with vaſt powers; from whom, alſo, they maintained that Moſes had his commiſſion, and the Jewiſh law its origin. To the coming of the Meſſiah, or deliverer promiſed by God to their fathers, they looked forward with hope; expecting that he would put an end to the dominion of the being whom they thus regarded as the maker and ruler of the world. Their no-

[*w*] See what has been collected on this ſubject by Jo. Chriſt. Wolfius, in his *Biblioth. Ebraic.* vol. ii. lib. vii. cap. i. § ix. p. 206.

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tions, therefore, ſo far as they related to the abolition of the ceremonial law by the coming of Chriſt, were certainly more correct than thoſe of the Jews in common. But their hopes in this reſpect redounded but little to their credit, ſince they were founded on a moſt grievous error, and were accompanied with many ſtrange and unwarrantable conceits, not leſs repugnant to right reaſon than to the Jewiſh religion.

The Samaritans.

XIX. The Samaritans, who performed their ſacred rites on mount Garizim, were involved in the ſame calamities which befel the Jewiſh people, and were no leſs forward than the Jews in adding, to their other afflictions, the numerous evils produced by factions and inteſtine tumults. They were not, however, divided into ſo many religious ſects; although the inſtances of Doſitheus, Menander, and Simon Magus, plainly prove that there were not wanting amongſt them ſome who were carried away by the luſt of novelty, and ſullied the religion of their anceſtors, by incorporating with it many of the principles of orientaliſm [*x*]. Many things have been handed down to us by the Jews reſpecting the public religion of theſe people, on which, however, we cannot place much reliance, ſince they were unqueſtionably dictated by a ſpirit of invidious malignity. But ſince Chriſt himſelf attributes to the Samaritans a great degree of ignorance reſpecting God, and things of a divine nature [*y*], it is not to be doubted that in their tenets the truth was much debaſed by ſuperſtition, and the light in no ſmall danger of being overpowered by ob-

[*x*] The principal authors who have treated of the Samaritans are pointed out by Jo. Gottlob. Carpzovius, in his *Critic. Sacr. Vet. Teſt.* part ii. cap. iv. p. 585.

[*y*] Joh. iv. 22.

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ſcurity; and that their religion was much more contaminated by error than that of the Jews. In this one thing only can they be ſaid to have ſhewn themſelves ſuperior to the Jews, that they did not attempt to gloſs over or conceal the many imperfections of their religion, but frankly acknowledged its defects, and looked forward with hope to the time when the Meſſiah (whoſe advent they expected in common with the Jewiſh nation) would communicate to them that larger meaſure of ſpiritual inſtruction, of which they ſtood ſo much in need [z].

XX. So

[z] Joh. iv. 25. That the ſentiments of the woman who converſed at the well with Chriſt were the ſame with thoſe of the Samaritans in general, will not admit of a doubt: for from whence could a common perſon like her have obtained the information ſhe diſcovers on ſeveral points relating to the Meſſiah, unleſs from popular traditions current amongſt thoſe of her own nation. Theſe ſentiments then furniſh us with a ſtrong argument in anſwer to the Engliſh writer Ant. Collins, and others, who contend that the more ancient Hebrews entertained no expectation of a Meſſiah; but that this hope firſt ſprung up amongſt the Jews ſome ſhort time before the coming of our Saviour. So deep and inveterate was the enmity which ſubſiſted between the Jews and the Samaritans, that it is utterly incredible that a hope of this kind ſhould have been communicated from either of them to the other. It neceſſarily follows, therefore, that as both of them were, at the time of our Saviour's birth, looking for the appearance of a Meſſiah from above, they muſt have derived the expectation from one common ſource, doubtleſs the books of Moſes and the diſcipline of their anceſtors; and conſequently that this hope was entertained long before the Babyloniſh captivity, and the riſe of the Samaritans. I mention only the books of Moſes, becauſe it is well known that the Samaritans did not conſider any of the other writings of the Old Teſtament as ſacred, or of divine original; and it is, therefore, not at all likely that any information which they might poſſeſs, reſpecting the Meſſiah that was to come, ſhould have been drawn from any other ſource. In the diſcourſe of the Samaritan woman, we likewiſe diſcover what were the ſentiments

State of the Jews not reſident in Paleſtine.

XX. So exceedingly great was the fecundity of the Jewiſh people, that occaſionally multitudes of them had been conſtrained to emigrate from their native country; and at the period of which we are now treating, the deſcendants of Abraham were to be met with in every part of the known world. In all the provinces of the Roman empire, in particular, they were to be found in great numbers, either ſerving in the army, or engaged

ments of the ancient Hebrews reſpecting the Meſſiah. The expectation of the Jews, at the time of our Saviour's coming, was, as we have ſeen, directed towards a warlike leader, a hero, an emperor, who ſhould recover for the oppreſſed poſterity of Abraham their liberty and rights: but the Samaritans, as appears from the converſation of this woman, looked forward to the Meſſiah in the light of a ſpiritual teacher and guide, who ſhould inſtruct them in a more perfect and acceptable way of ſerving God than that which they then followed. Now the Samaritans had always kept themſelves entirely diſtinct from the Jews, and would never conſent to adopt any point of doctrine or diſcipline from them; and the conſequence was, that the ancient opinion reſpecting the Meſſiah had been retained in much greater purity by the former than by the Jews, whoſe arrogance and impatience, under the calamities to which they were expoſed, had brought them by degrees to turn their backs on the opinion entertained by their forefathers on this ſubject, and to cheriſh the expectation that in the Meſſiah promiſed to them by God they ſhould have to hail an earthly prince and deliverer. Laſtly, I think it particularly deſerving of attention, that it is clear from what is ſaid by this woman, that the Samaritans did not conſider the Moſaic law in the light of a permanent eſtabliſhment, but expected that it would paſs away, and its place be ſupplied by a more perfect ſyſtem of diſcipline, on the coming of the Meſſiah. For when ſhe hears our Saviour predict the downfall of the Samaritan, as well as the Jewiſh religion, inſtead of taking fire at his words, and taxing him, after the Jewiſh manner, with blaſphemy againſt God and againſt Moſes, (Acts, vi. 13, 14, 15.) ſhe anſwers with mildneſs and compoſure, that ſhe knew the Meſſiah would come, and was not unappriſed that the religion of her anceſtors would then undergo a change.

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in the purſuits of commerce, or practiſing ſome lucrative art. Thoſe of the Jews who thus ventured to eſtabliſh themſelves without the confines of Paleſtine, were every where ſucceſsful in obtaining that general ſort of encouragement and protection from violence, which was to be derived from various regulations and edicts of the emperors and magiſtrates in their favour [*a*]: but the peculiarities of their religion and manners cauſed them to be held in very general contempt, and not unfrequently expoſed them to much vexation and annoyance from the jealouſy and indignation of a ſuperſtitious populace. Many of them, in conſequence of their long reſidence and intercourſe amongſt foreign nations, fell into the error of endeavouring to make their religion accommodate itſelf to the principles and inſtitutions of ſome of the different ſyſtems of heathen diſcipline, of which it would be eaſy to adduce numerous inſtances: but, on the other hand, it is clear that the Jews brought many of thoſe with whom they ſojourned to perceive the ſuperiority of the Moſaic religion over the Gentile ſuperſtitions, and were highly inſtrumental in cauſing them to forſake the worſhip of a plurality of gods. Upon the whole, the circumſtance of the Jews having found their way into almoſt every region of the habitable globe, may, I think, juſtly be claſſed amongſt the means made uſe of by Divine Providence to open a path for the general diffuſion of the truths of Chriſtianity. For it is not to be doubted that the knowledge which the Gentiles thus acquired from the Jews, reſpecting the only true God, the Creator and Governor of

[*a*] Vid. Jac. Gronovii *Decreta Romana et Aſiatica pro Judæis ad cultum divinum per Aſiæ Minoris Urbes ſecure obeundum*, Lugd. Bat. 1712, in 8vo.

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the univerſe, although it might be but partial, and of limited extent, inclined many of them the more readily to lend their attention to the arguments and exhortations which were ſubſequently uſed by our Saviour's apoſtles, for the purpoſe of exploding the worſhip of falſe deities, and recalling men to thoſe principles of religion which have their foundation in reaſon and in nature.

THE

THE

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

OF THE

FIRST CENTURY.

CENT. I.

The birth of Chriſt.

I. WITH a view to effect the recovery of the human race from ſuch a deplorable ſtate of wretchedneſs and diſorder, and to inſtruct mankind in the path that leads to everlaſting ſalvation and peace, the Son of God voluntarily condeſcended to take upon himſelf our nature, and to be born of a virgin, a deſcendant of the royal houſe of David, in Bethlehem, a city of Paleſtine. This event, we know, took place under the reign of the emperor Auguſtus; but as to the identical day, or month, or even year of its occurrence, it is impoſſible to ſpeak with any degree of preciſion, ſince all the hiſtorians of the life of our bleſſed Saviour, with whoſe writings we are acquainted, are entirely ſilent as to theſe particulars: and indeed it ſhould ſeem that the earlieſt Chriſtians were not much better informed on the ſubject than ourſelves, ſince they appear to have been much divided in opinion as to the exact time of this moſt important nativity [*a*]. Several ingenious

[*a*] Vid. Clemens Alexandr. *Stromat.* lib. i. p. 339, 340. Beauſobre *Remarques ſur le Nouveau Teſtament*, tom. i. p. 6. If the early Chriſtians had known the preciſe day of our Saviour's nativity, they would without doubt have diſtinguiſhed it by a religious commemoration, in the ſame way as

CENT. I. genious and profound ſcholars have, at different periods, beſtowed an abundance of pains on the ſubject, in the hope of being able to ſupply this deficiency in the more ancient writers; but none of them have as yet made any diſcovery that can be ſaid to put the matter out of all doubt [*b*]. But ſurely it is of little or no conſequence that we are uninformed of the particular year and day that uſhered in this glorious light to the world: it is ſufficient for us to be aſſured that the Sun of Righteouſneſs hath ariſen on our benighted race, that its refulgence hath diſpelled the darkneſs with which the human mind was enveloped, and that nothing intervenes to prevent us from availing ourſelves of the ſplendour and invigorating warmth of its beams.

Accounts of his infancy and youth.

II. The inſpired hiſtorians of the life and actions of our Saviour, have left but little on record reſpecting his childhood and early youth.

as they were accuſtomed to celebrate the day of his reſurrection. But it is well known that the day which is now held ſacred as the anniverſary of our Saviour's birth, was fixed on in much more recent times than thoſe in which we find the Chriſtians celebrating the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt on the apoſtles, and the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead. This circumſtance may, I think, be conſidered as a proof that the friends and companions of our Lord themſelves were unacquainted with the day of his birth, or, at leaſt, that they left no memorial behind them concerning it, and that the firſt Chriſtians, finding the point involved in much obſcurity and doubt, would not take upon them to determine any thing about it.

[*b*] The reader who wiſhes to obtain a view of moſt of the opinions that have been entertained reſpecting the year of Chriſt's nativity, may conſult Jo. Alb. Fabricii *Bibliograph. Antiq.* cap. vii. § ix. p. 187. Some additional arguments and conjectures may be collected from the more recent publications of ſeveral learned men on this ſubject; but, from amongſt all theſe different opinions, it is not poſſible to ſelect one that can be altogether relied on as free from error.

Whilſt

Whilſt yet an infant, it appears that his parents fled with him into Egypt, in order to ſhield him from the perſecuting violence of Herod the Great [*c*]. At twelve years of age, we find him in the temple at Jeruſalem, diſputing with the moſt learned of the Jewiſh doctors, who were filled with aſtoniſhment at his underſtanding and knowledge. The remaining part of his life, until he entered on his miniſtry, he appears to have ſpent with his parents; exhibiting in himſelf an exemplary pattern of affectionate filial obedience [*d*]. Farther than this, it ſhould ſeem the divine

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[*c*] Matth. ii. 13.

[*d*] Luke, ii. 51, 52. Several of our beſt informed ſcholars do not heſitate to aſſert with the greateſt confidence, that Chriſt, during his youth, exerciſed the art of a carpenter, which he had learnt of his parent, and that he aſſiſted Joſeph in the different parts of his buſineſs. Indeed there are ſome who conſider this circumſtance as a very honourable feature in our Saviour's character, and who conſequently have not been very ſparing of their cenſure on thoſe who do not believe the fact, or at leaſt have ventured to expreſs ſome doubts on the ſubject. See Montacute's *Origines Eccleſiaſtica*, tom. i. p. 305, and 384. For my own part, without pretending to dictate to others, I muſt confeſs that the matter does not appear to me to have been ſo clearly aſcertained, as to be placed beyond all doubt. Thoſe who take the affirmative ſide of the queſtion, rely principally on two arguments: the firſt drawn from the words of the Jews, Mark, vi. 3. οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ΤΕΚΤΩΝ ὁ υἱὸς Μαρίας. Is not this *the carpenter*, the ſon of Mary? The other from a paſſage in Juſtin Martyr, in which our Saviour is ſaid to have worked as a carpenter, and made ploughs and yokes. *Dialog. cum Tryphon.* p. 270. I paſs over the more recent authorities that are brought forward in ſupport of the fact, as of little moment, ſince they are all either founded on the above mentioned paſſage in Juſtin, or drawn from vulgar report, or the apocryphal goſpels. Confining myſelf, therefore, to the two principal authorities above noticed, I muſt ſay that I do not perceive how any argument of much weight is to be drawn from either of them. For as to the remark of the Jews, in which our

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divine wiſdom did not think it neceſſary that we ſhould be informed. But theſe few particulars

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Saviour is termed the carpenter, I conſider it to refer merely to the occupation of his parent; and that τέκτων ought to be underſtood, in this place, as meaning nothing more than ὁ τῦ τέκτονος υἱὸς, the ſon of the carpenter. In ſupport of this explanation of the term, I may refer to the authority of St. Matthew himſelf, cap. xiii. 55.; and almoſt every language ſupplies us with inſtances which prove that it was a common practice to diſtinguiſh a child from others of the ſame name, by giving him a ſurname derived from the trade or occupation of his parent. The Engliſh language furniſhes us with examples of this in the ſurnames of Baker, Taylor, Carpenter, Smith, &c.; and what is ſtill more to the point, it is at this day the cuſtom in ſome of the oriental nations, and particularly amongſt the Arabs, to diſtinguiſh any learned or illuſtrious man that may chance to be born of parents who follow any particular trade or art, by giving him the name of ſuch trade or art as a ſurname, although he may never have followed it himſelf. Thus, if a man of learning happen to be deſcended from a dyer or a taylor, they call him the Dyer's ſon, or the Taylor's ſon, or frequently, omitting the word ſon, ſimply the Dyer, or the Taylor. This fact is ſo well known to thoſe who are converſant in oriental affairs, that I deem it unneceſſary to cite any particular authority for it. I ſhall not here enter into an inquiry whether the reading of the paſſage of St. Mark above alluded to, as it ſtands in our copies, be correct or not. The matter unqueſtionably admits of ſome doubt: for it is clear from Mill, that there are many ancient manuſcripts which, inſtead of τέκτων, have ὁ τῦ τέκτονος; a reading which I certainly ſhall not take upon me, like him, abſolutely to reject, ſince, as I before obſerved, it may be ſupported on the authority of St. Matthew himſelf. Vid. Millii *Prolegomena in Nov. Teſt.* § 698. p. 66. It ſhould ſeem alſo that Origen underſtood the words of St. Mark in this ſenſe, ſince he expreſsly denies that Chriſt is called τέκτονα, or a carpenter, in any part of the New Teſtament. *Contra Celſum*, lib. vi. p. 662. The learned well know that Juſtin Martyr is not to be conſidered in every reſpect as an oracle, but that much of what he relates is wholly undeſerving of credit. Poſſibly what he ſays, in regard to the point before us, might be taken from one or other of the apocryphal Goſpels of the Infancy of Chriſt, which were in circulation amongſt the Chriſtians in his time.

not

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not being found ſufficient to ſatisfy human curioſity, ſome artful unprincipled characters amongſt the early Chriſtians had the preſumption to avail themſelves of the ignorance and inquiſitiveneſs of a credulous multitude in this reſpect, and, under the pretence of illuſtrating this obſcure part of our Saviour's life, to impoſe on the public a compilation of ridiculous and nonſenſical ſtories, which they entitled Goſpels of the Infancy of Chriſt [*e*].

John the præcurſor of Chriſt.

III. Chriſt entered on his miniſtry in the thirtieth year of his age; and, in order that his doctrine might obtain a more ready acceptance with the Jews, a man named John, the ſon of a Jewiſh prieſt, a perſon whoſe gravity of deportment and whole tenor of life was ſuch as to excite veneration and reſpect, was commanded by God to announce to the people the immediate coming of the promiſed Meſſiah, and to endeavour to awaken in their ſenſeleſs groveling minds a proper diſpoſition to receive him. This illuſtrious character proclaimed himſelf to be the forerunner or herald of the Meſſiah, commiſſioned to call with a loud voice on the inhabitants of the wilderneſs to amend and make ready their ways for the King that was approaching [*f*]; and

[*e*] Such parts of theſe Goſpels of the Infancy of Chriſt as had eſcaped the ravages of time, were collected together, and publiſhed by Jo. Albert. Fabricius, in his *Codex Apocryph. Nov. Teſt.*

[*f*] If we recur to the manners of the eaſtern nations, John's compariſon of himſelf to a forerunner, or herald, will be found to poſſeſs a peculiar force and beauty. In thoſe countries it has ever been cuſtomary, even down to our own times, for monarchs, when they are about to undertake a journey, to ſend before them, into thoſe regions through which they mean to travel, certain of their ſervants, who, with a loud voice, admoniſh the inhabitants to amend the roads,

CENT. I. and having his mind inflamed with a holy zeal, he executed his miſſion with ardour and fidelity, rebuking the vices of the nation ſharply and without reſerve. The form of initiation which he adopted, in regard to all thoſe who promiſed an amendment of heart and life, was to immerge them in the river, according to the ancient Jewiſh practice [*g*]. Jeſus himſelf, before he entered on his miniſtry, condeſcended to comply with this rite, and was ſolemnly baptized by John in the river Jordan, leſt (according to his own words) he ſhould appear to have diſregarded any part of the divine law. John finiſhed his earthly courſe under the reign of Herod the tetrarch. Having had the courage openly to reprove that tyrant for an inceſtuous connection with his brother's wife, he was in conſequence thereof caſt into priſon, and after ſome little while beheaded [*b*].

The life of Chriſt.

IV. It cannot be neceſſary that we ſhould, in this place, enter into a minute detail of the life and actions of Jeſus Chriſt. The writings of the four evangeliſts are in the hands of every one; and no one who has read them can need to be informed, that for upwards of three years, in the

roads, and remove every obſtacle that might obſtruct or impede the royal progreſs. By the form of annunciation, therefore, which John made uſe of, an ardent wiſh was manifeſted to exalt the character of the Meſſiah, by likening his approach to that of the mightieſt of monarchs; whilſt, at the ſame time, ſo far from magnifying the importance of his own ſervices, they are with the greateſt humility placed on a level with thoſe which were uſually executed by inferior ſervants.

[*g*] Matth. iii. 2. John, i. 22.

[*b*] The reader who may wiſh for more copious information on this ſubject, is referred to two diſſertations of Cellarius *de Johanne Baptiſta ejuſque Carcere ac Supplicio*, which he will find publiſhed by Walchius, amongſt his *Diſſertationes Academicæ*, part i. p. 169. part ii. p. 373.

midſt

midſt of numberleſs perils and inſidious machina- CENT. I.
tions, and in defiance of the moſt inſulting and injurious treatment, he continued with an inflexible conſtancy to point out to the Jewiſh people, by a mode of inſtruction peculiarly adapted to the manners and way of thinking of themſelves, and the other nations of the eaſt, the true and only ſure means by which everlaſting ſalvation was to be obtained. It muſt be equally unneceſſary to remark, that he diſcovered no ſort of deſire whatever for either riches or worldly honours, but that his life was ſpent in poverty, and diſtinguiſhed by ſuch ſanctity and innocence, that even his moſt virulent enemies could find nothing whereof they might accuſe him. In regard, likewiſe, to the divinity of his miſſion, and the truth of the doctrines which he taught, every one muſt be apprized that he placed both the one and the other beyond all doubt, not only by referring to various prophecies and oracular paſſages contained in the writings of the Old Teſtament, but alſo by a ſeries of the moſt ſtupendous miracles. Of his miracles it may be obſerved, that, from beginning to end, they were uniformly of a ſalutary and beneficent character, *i. e.* they were, in every reſpect, ſtrictly conſentaneous to the ſpirit and tendency of his miniſtry, and exhibited no unfaithful types or images of thoſe ſpiritual bleſſings which he was about to communicate to mankind. Had our Saviour come to enforce with rigour the penalties of the law, he might with propriety have eſtabliſhed the authenticity of his miſſion by terrific prodigies and ſigns; but he came as the meſſenger of divine clemency and pity, and in no way could the truth or the character of his doctrine have been more beautifully or emphatically

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marked than by the wonders of benevolence and love.

Chriſt ſeceded from the Jewiſh church to a certain degree.

V. In the line of duty which Chriſt preſcribed for the Jews, he omitted none of thoſe points which were enjoined by the law of Moſes; and it is obſervable, that he joined with the inhabitants of Paleſtine in their acts of public worſhip, and in all other rites of divine origin. This ſhould ſeem to have been done, partly for the purpoſe of bearing teſtimony to the divine authority of the Jewiſh law and religion, and partly with a view to avoid incurring the hatred and ill offices of the prieſts and lawyers by any unneceſſary provocation. He made no ſcruple, however, openly to predict the downfall, not only of the Jewiſh ſtate, but alſo of the Moſaic worſhip and religion, and to declare, in the plaineſt and moſt expreſs terms, that under his auſpices a new religious community would be eſtabliſhed, founded upon more perfect principles of worſhip, and which, extending itſelf to the farthermoſt parts of the earth, would unite the whole human race in one common bond of fraternal love [*i*]. Neither did he confine himſelf merely to thus propheſying the riſe of a new and moſt comprehenſive religion, but proceeded at once with his own hands to lay the foundation of it, by cauſing his diſciples to baptize with water all thoſe who, either through the preaching of himſelf or his apoſtles, had been brought to confeſs that he was the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind commiſſioned from above; thereby initiating them under a new covenant, the terms and obligations of which were ſuch as could not fail to ſeparate

[*i*] Luke, xix. John, iv. 21. Matth. x. 32. xvi. 18. John, x. 16.

them

them from the reſt of the Jewiſh community [*k*]. Although, therefore, it muſt be allowed that Chriſt and his diſciples did not formally renounce their connection with the Jewiſh church, or abſolutely withdraw themſelves from it; yet it is clear that, in a certain degree, he eſtabliſhed a new ſect therein, and that in reality he ſeparated both himſelf and his followers from the reſt of the Jews [*l*].

VI. Since

[*k*] John, iii. 22. 26. iv. 2.

[*l*] Several learned men, chiefly amongſt the civilians, have had their doubts as to this point, of Chriſt with his followers having ſeceded from the Jewiſh church, and eſtabliſhed a new and diſtinct religious community. But to me the fact appears to admit of no queſtion whatever. Whoever promulgates new principles or precepts,—preſcribes a new rule of life and conduct,—makes uſe of a certain ſacred rite, with a view to diſtinguiſh all thoſe who are willing to conform to thoſe precepts, and who approve of ſuch rule of life, from the reſt of the community, and to mark their reception into his ſect,—holds ſeparate ſolemn aſſemblies with theſe his aſſociates,—and, laſtly, exhorts them on every occaſion to be conſtant in their adherence to that rule of faith and action which they had thus embraced;—ſuch perſon muſt, in my opinion, unqueſtionably be conſidered as founding a new religious community, and cauſing his followers, in a certain degree, to forſake that to which they formerly belonged. Now our Saviour did all theſe things. For, in the firſt place, he announced himſelf to all whom he undertook to inſtruct, as the Meſſiah promiſed by God to the anceſtors of the Jews; and taught them, that their hopes of eternal ſalvation ought to be built on his merits alone. Then, thoſe who believed in him were enjoined to love each other as brethren, and informed that the worſhip required of them by God was not that of ſacrifices and external obſervances, but that of the heart and mind. Next, all who profeſſed themſelves ready to eſpouſe theſe principles, and conform to theſe precepts, were made to undergo a ſolemn form of luſtration at the hands of his diſciples, (John, iv. 2, 3.) and by this regenerating ceremony became inveſted as it were with the rights of citizenſhip. And laſtly, thoſe who had been thus initiated he aſſociated with himſelf in the cloſeſt ties of intimacy, and cauſed them publicly to declare the faith and the hope which they had in him; convening

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VI. Since it was intended that the religious community thus eſtabliſhed by Chriſt, although confined

them frequently together for the purpoſe of religious worſhip, and, amongſt other things, particularly appriſing them of the approaching downfall of the Jewiſh ſtate and religion. The fact is likewiſe ſupported by other circumſtances, but I do not deem it neceſſary to bring them forward at preſent. I will, however, take this opportunity of ſaying a few words reſpecting the rite of baptiſm, by which our Saviour ordained that his followers ſhould be received into the kingdom of heaven, or the new covenant. My opinion on this ſubject entirely correſponds with theirs, who conſider this ceremony as having been adopted by the Jews long before the time of our Saviour, and uſed by them in the initiating of ſtrangers who had embraced their religion. To omit other arguments of no little weight in favour of this opinion, I think it may be ſupported on the authority of Scripture itſelf, and particularly from the account given us in John, i. of the embaſſy ſent by the ſupreme council of the Jews to John the Baptiſt, the forerunner of Chriſt. For the rite itſelf, of baptiſing with water thoſe who confeſſed their ſins, and promiſed an amendment of life, does not ſeem to have been regarded by the elders of the Jews in the light of a novelty, or as a practice by any means of an unuſual kind. The only point on which they require information of John is, from whence he derived his authority to perform this ſolemn and ſacred ceremony. The thing itſelf occaſioned them no ſurpriſe, ſince daily uſe had rendered it familiar to them: what attracted their attention was, that a private individual ſhould take upon him to perform it in a way contrary to the eſtabliſhed uſage of the nation. But, unleſs I am much deceived, an inference of ſtill greater moment may be drawn from this meſſage ſent by the Jewiſh council to John, and which will ſupply us with the reaſon why our Saviour adopted this ancient Jewiſh practice of baptiſing proſelytes with water: for, as it ſtrikes me, the concluding queſtion put by the meſſengers evidently implies an expectation in the Jews of that age, that the Meſſiah for whom they looked would baptize men with water. After John had told them that he was neither the Chriſt or Meſſiah, nor Elias, nor any other of the ancient prophets, they finally interrogate him thus: "If thou be not that Chriſt, nor Elias, nor that prophet, why baptizeſt thou then?" John i. 25.

confined at firſt within very narrow limits, ſhould by degrees extend itſelf to the farthermoſt parts of the earth, it was requiſite that he ſhould ſelect certain perſons, who, from their being admitted to a conſtant and familiar intercourſe with him, might acquire that lively degree of faith and zeal, which ſhould enable them, in ſpite of every obſtacle and difficulty, to make their way into the different regions of the world, for the purpoſe of propagating the religion of their divine Maſter, and bearing teſtimony to the exemplary purity of his life, and the ſtupendous deeds and miracles by which he eſtabliſhed the truth of his doctrine. From amongſt the great multitude of Jews, therefore, that had joined themſelves to him, he choſe twelve whom he deemed the moſt faithful and beſt fitted for the taſk; appointing them, in a

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i. 25. Now if theſe words be attentively conſidered, I think it muſt be allowed that they will unqueſtionably admit of the following conſtruction: "We, as well as thoſe who ſent us, underſtand that when the Meſſiah ſhall come, he will baptize and purify the Jewiſh race with water; we alſo expect that Elias, who is to precede him, will uſe the ſame ceremony for our initiation: but by what authority is it that you, who acknowledge that you are neither the Meſſiah nor Elias, aſſume to yourſelf the right of doing that which can only properly belong to them to perform,—we do not mean the baptiſing of ſtrangers, but the deſcendants of Abraham?" If this be the fair conſtruction of the meſſengers' words, (and I rather think that but few, if any, will deny it to be ſo,) we have no farther to look for the reaſon that in all probability induced our Saviour and his forerunner John to baptize their diſciples. An opinion, it appears, prevailed amongſt the Jews, that Elias, whoſe coming was to precede that of the Meſſiah, and alſo the Meſſiah himſelf, would initiate their diſciples by a ſacred ablution; and it was therefore neceſſary, in order to avoid giving the Jews any pretext for doubt reſpecting either Chriſt's authority or functions, that both John and himſelf ſhould accommodate themſelves to this popular perſuaſion. Of the origin of the opinion itſelf I know nothing.

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more eſpecial manner, his ambaſſadors to the human race, and diſtinguiſhing them from the reſt of his diſciples by the title of apoſtles [*m*]. The

[*m*] The word apoſtle, it is well known, ſignifies a legate, an ambaſſador, a perſon entruſted with a particular miſſion. The propriety, therefore, with which this appellation was beſtowed by Chriſt on thoſe friends whom he thought proper to ſelect for the propagation of his religion throughout the world, is manifeſt from this its common acceptation. But the reader will perhaps diſcover a peculiar force in this term, and more readily perceive the motives which probably induced our Saviour to apply it to thoſe whom he ſent forth, when he is informed that, in the age of which we are now treating, this appellation was appropriated to certain public officers of great credit and authority amongſt the Jews, who were the confidential miniſters of the high prieſt, and conſulted with by him on occaſions of the higheſt moment. They were alſo occaſionally inveſted with particular powers, and diſpatched on miſſions of importance, principally to ſuch of their countrymen as reſided in foreign parts. The collection of the yearly tribute to the temple, which all Jews were bound to pay, was likewiſe entruſted to their management, as were alſo ſeveral other affairs of no ſmall conſequence. For ſince all Jews, however widely they might be diſperſed throughout the various regions of the world, conſidered themſelves as belonging to one and the ſame family or commonwealth, of which the high prieſt reſiding at Jeruſalem was the præfect and head; and as the members of every inferior ſynagogue, however diſtant or remote, looked up to Jeruſalem as the mother and chief ſeat of their religion, and referred all abſtruſe or difficult matters, and any controverſies and queſtions of moment reſpecting divine ſubjects, to the deciſion of the high prieſt, it was abſolutely neceſſary that this ſupreme pontiff ſhould always have near him a number of perſons of fidelity, learning, and authority, of whoſe ſervices he might avail himſelf, in communicating his mandates and decrees to thoſe Jews who were ſettled in diſtant parts, and in arranging and determining the various points referred to him for deciſion. My recollection indeed does not enable me to produce any expreſs proofs from ancient authors, that, at the period of which we are ſpeaking, the high prieſt had any ſuch miniſters attached to him under the name of apoſtles; but I think that I can adduce ſuch preſumptive evidence of the fact, as will

The perſons thus ſelected were of mean extraction, poor, illiterate, and utterly unprovided with any

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will ſcarcely leave room for any queſtion on the ſubject. In the firſt place, it appears to me that St. Paul himſelf evidently intimates ſuch to have been the caſe, in the opening of his epiſtle to the Galatians, when he terms himſelf an apoſtle, not ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων, of men, nor δι' ἀνθρώπου, by man, but of God himſelf, and his Son Jeſus Chriſt. Gal. i. 1. For what neceſſity could there be that this inſpired writer ſhould thus accurately define the nature of his commiſſion, and ſo particularly mark the diſtinction between himſelf and an apoſtle inveſted with mere human authority, if the Jews, to whom that epiſtle is principally addreſſed, had been ſtrangers to that other kind of apoſtles commiſſioned by men, namely, apoſtles ſent by the Jewiſh high prieſt and magiſtrates to the different cities of the Roman empire? This interpretation was, long ſince, given to the words of the apoſtle by St. Jerome, *Comm. ad Galatas*, tom. ix. opp. p. 124. edit. Francof. *Uſque hodie*, ſays he, *a patriarchis Judæorum apoſtolos mitti* (conſtat). *Ad diſtinctionem itaque eorum qui mittuntur ab hominibus, et ſui, qui ſit miſſus a Chriſto, tale ſumpſit exordium: Paulus apoſtolus, non ab hominibus, neque per hominem.* Theſe words of St. Jerome, who reſided in Paleſtine, and was every way ſkilled in Jewiſh affairs, muſt, I think, neceſſarily be allowed to weigh ſtrongly in favour of the above ſtatement reſpecting the apoſtles of the high prieſt. The meaning they convey indiſputably is, that in the time of St. Paul, it was the practice of the Jewiſh high prieſt to ſend forth apoſtles, after the ſame manner as the Jewiſh patriarchs were accuſtomed to do at the time he (St. Jerome) wrote: and there appears to be no reaſon whatever which ſhould induce us to queſtion the credibility of what is thus ſaid. But let us return to the words of St. Paul, in which, as it appears to me, there is ſomething worthy of remark, which, if my memory does not fail me, has never hitherto attracted the attention of any commentator. St. Paul ſays, that he is an apoſtle, not of men, neither by man. He therefore clearly divides human apoſtles into two claſſes; *viz.* thoſe who were commiſſioned merely by one man, and thoſe who were inveſted with their powers by ſeveral. Now what does this mean? Who are theſe men, and who that ſingle man, who, in St. Paul's time, were accuſtomed to ſend amongſt the Jews certain perſons, whom it was uſual to diſtinguiſh by the appellation of

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any of thoſe arts or gifts which are calculated to win the countenance and favour of the world, and

of apoſtles? I truſt that I ſhall be able in great meaſure to clear this up. The ſingle man to whom St. Paul alludes could, I conceive, have been none other than the great high prieſt of the Jews; and the ſeveral men who had alſo their apoſtles were, as it ſtrikes me, unqueſtionably the *archontes*, or Jewiſh magiſtrates. The learned well know that juſtice was adminiſtered to the Jews who dwelt in the different provinces of the Roman empire, by certain magiſtrates or vicegerents of the high prieſt, who were termed after the Greek *archontes*, concerning whom a curious and elegant little work was publiſhed by Weſſeling, *ad Inſcript. Beren.* Traject. ad Rhen. 1738, in 8vo. I take the meaning, therefore, of St. Paul to be, that he neither derived his commiſſion from thoſe inferior magiſtrates, to whom the Jews who dwelt without the limits of Paleſtine were ſubject, nor was he delegated by the chief of their religion, the high prieſt himſelf. That theſe *archontes* had under them certain miniſters who were termed apoſtles, much in the ſame way as the high prieſt had, is clear from Euſebius, who ſays, Ἀποστόλους δὲ εἰσίτι καὶ νῦν ἔθος ἐστὶν Ἰουδαίοις ὀνομάζειν τὰς τὰ ἐγκύκλια γεάμματα παρὰ τῶν ΑΡΧΟΝΤΩΝ αὐτῶν ἐπικομιζομένους. Apoſtolos etiam nunc Judæi eos appellare ſolent qui *archontum* ſuorum litteras circumquaque deportare ſolent. *Comment. in Eſaiam*, cap. xviii. in Montfauconii *Collectione nova Patr. Græcor.* tom. ii. p. 424. But I ſhall leave this conjecture to the conſideration of thoſe who may be qualified to judge of it. My preſent object extends no farther than to ſhew that, in the time of our bleſſed Saviour, thoſe perſons who were delegated by the high prieſt for any ſpecial purpoſe, or charged with the execution of his commands, were diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of apoſtles. It affords an argument of no ſmall conſequence in ſupport of the fact as thus ſtated, that it has been clearly proved by ſeveral learned men, and particularly by Gothofred, Petavius, and Weſſeling, from various paſſages in the *Codex Theodoſianus*, and other ancient authors, that, after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, the Jewiſh patriarchs, who may be ſaid to have in a certain degree ſupplied the place of the high prieſts, had attached to them certain miniſters of great truſt and authority under the denomination of apoſtles. Vid. Jac. Gothofredus *ad Codicem Theodoſianum*, tom. vi. p. 251, 252. edit. Ritterian. Dion. Petavius *Animadverſ. ad Epiphanium ad Hæreſ.* xxx.

et

and to impoſe on the unwary and credulous part of mankind: and it is intimated in Scripture, (1 Cor. i. 20, 21, et ſeq.) that ſuch were intentionally choſen, leſt the efficacy and fruits of their miſſion ſhould be attributed to eloquence, to authority, or to any other human and natural cauſe, and not to the divine power of God. In order, likewiſe, that the teſtimony with which they were to be charged might be of the moſt ample kind, and ſuperior to all exception, he made them his conſtant and intimate companions through life;

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et de Hierarchia Eccleſiaſt. lib. i. cap. vi. p. 16. and lib. ii. cap. ii. § x. p. 45. *in Dogmatibus Theologicis*, tom. iv. Petr. Weſſelingius *de Archontibus Judæor.* p. 91. That theſe patriarchs ſhould have borrowed the term from the Chriſtians, admits not of a moment's belief; ſince they regarded every thing pertaining to Chriſtianity with the moſt inveterate hatred, and revolted with the utmoſt abhorrence from any thing like a ſhadow of connection with thoſe who profeſſed it: a circumſtance which muſt have eſcaped Gothofred, or he never would have concluded that the Jews were unacquainted with the term apoſtle until after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. The appellation, therefore, was unqueſtionably Jewiſh; and it appears to me equally indiſputable, that the Jewiſh people were well acquainted with its uſe and import in the time of our Saviour. Theſe conſiderations, I think, can leave but little doubt on the mind of any one as to the motives which induced our bleſſed Lord to denominate, as we are expreſsly told by St. Luke (vi. 13.) that he did, thoſe of his miniſters whom he ſelected for the purpoſe of making known his precepts to all the nations of the earth, apoſtles. By the application of this term to thoſe whom he thus delegated, his intention doubtleſs was to intimate to the Jews that he was inveſted with all the rights of the ſupreme head of their religion, and that they ought to look up to him as the true high prieſt of the Hebrew nation. It does not appear how many perſons of this deſcription the high prieſt had under him, at the period of which we are ſpeaking; but I conceive it to be extremely probable that their number correſponded with that of the Jewiſh tribes. Suppoſing this to have been the caſe, it accounts for our Saviour's fixing the number of his apoſtles at twelve.

CENT. I. retaining them always about his perſon, except on one occaſion when he ſent them, for a ſhort ſpace, on a miſſion to the Jews [n]. Their number being fixed at twelve, has a manifeſt relation to the Jewiſh tribes [o]; and it ſhould ſeem that Chriſt intended thereby to intimate to the Jews that he was the Sovereign Lord, the true King, and great High Prieſt of all the twelve tribes of Iſrael.

And of the ſeventy diſciples.

VII. In addition to theſe twelve, whom Chriſt ordained to be the meſſengers and teachers of his word to the world at large, he ſelected from his diſciples ſeventy others, whom he ſent before him into the different parts of Judæa, whither he meant to come, for the purpoſe of preparing and diſpoſing the minds of the Jewiſh people; ſo that his own preaching might be the more readily liſtened to, and attended with the greater effect [p]. Of theſe ſeventy mention is only once made by any of the evangeliſts, and no reliance can be placed on the account which ſome more recent writers have pretended to give of their names, their journies, and their labours [q]. We are not, however, by any means authorized from hence to conclude that they were only once employed by Chriſt, or that their powers were

[n] Matth. x. 5, 6, 7.

[o] To be convinced of this, I think we need only recur to our Saviour's own words, Matth. xix. 28. Luke, xxii. 30. which plainly intimate that the number of his apoſtles had an expreſs reference to the number of the Jewiſh tribes.

[p] Luke, x. 1, et ſeq.

[q] Some notices or memoirs reſpecting the ſeventy diſciples, compiled by ſome of the later Greek writers, were publiſhed by Fabricius, at p. 474. of his *Libri de Vita et Morte Moſis, a* Gilb. Gaulmino *illuſtrati*; but which Blondell, (*de Epiſcopis et Preſbyteris*, p. 93.) has ſhewn to be utterly undeſerving of credit.

withdrawn

withdrawn from them after they had fulfilled the object of this their firſt miſſion. Their number correſponded with that of the ſenators who compoſed the ſanhedrim, or chief council of the Jews; and I therefore conſider it as highly probable that Chriſt, in the ſelection of this number, alſo might intend to impreſs on the minds of the Jewiſh people, by an oſtenſible ſign, that the former authority of the high prieſt and chief council was now aboliſhed, and all power as to divine matters become veſted in himſelf alone.

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VIII. The perſonal miniſtry and inſtruction of our bleſſed Saviour was confined entirely to the Jews; nor did he ſuffer his diſciples, during his continuance on earth, to go to any of the neighbouring nations [r]. The magnitude, however, of the wonderful things that he performed will not permit us to doubt but that his fame ſoon diffuſed itſelf throughout a great part of the world. Amongſt other things which tend to prove this, it is related by writers of no ſmall credit, that Abgarus, the king of Edeſſa in Syria, being afflicted with a ſevere diſeaſe, beſought by letter the aſſiſtance of Chriſt; and that our Saviour not only returned an anſwer to the king, but alſo ſent him his picture [s]. What are conſidered by ſome as genuine copies of the letters that paſſed on this occaſion, are ſtill extant. In regard to the fact itſelf, I ſee no reaſon for rejecting it as altogether undeſerving of belief; but as to what is ſaid of the picture, I think we may con-

The fame of Chriſt extends beyond Judea.

[r] Matth. x. 5, 6. xv. 24.

[s] Euſebius *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. i. cap. xiii. p. 31. And Jo. Alb. Fabricius *Codice Apocrypho N. Teſt.* tom. i. p. 317. Theoph. Sigifr. Bayer enters much at length into the hiſtory of Abgarus, in his *Hiſtoria Edeſſena et Oſröena*, lib. iii. p. 104, et ſeq. and p. 358.

ſider

CENT. I. ſider it as unqueſtionably the invention of the Greek writers of a later age: and it appears to me, that the letters carry with them no very obſcure marks of forgery and impoſition [*t*].

Fruits of Chriſt's miniſtry.

IX. A conſiderable number of the Jews, penetrated with aſtoniſhment at the many wonderful proofs which Chriſt gave of his divine authority and power, became his diſciples; being convinced that he could be none other than the holy one of God, the true Meſſiah, whoſe coming was predicted of old by the prophets: and it is clear

[*t*] The arguments by which the authenticity of this hiſtory, and of the letters, which form no inconſiderable part of it, is maintained or denied, are brought together into one view, and contraſted with much judgment by Baſnage, in his *Hiſtoire des Juifs*, tom. i. cap. xviii. p. 500. Aſſeman adopts ſomewhat of a middle courſe between the two extremes, conſidering Abgarus's letter as genuine, but ſuppoſing that reputed to be Chriſt's to have been merely a note or minute of our Saviour's words made by Abgarus's ambaſſador. *Biblioth. Oriental. Clement. Vatican.* tom. i. p. 554. and tom. iii. part ii. p. 8. For this opinion he had the authority of Bellarmin. Bayer alſo is friendly to it, in his *Hiſtoria Edeſſena*, p. 109. On the other hand, the learned and pious Bourguet would fain perſuade us, that both the letters and the hiſtory itſelf were the invention of Euſebius. *Biblioth. Italique*, tom. xiii. p. 121, et ſeq. I cannot, however, by any means conſent to charge a man ſo devoid of ſuperſtition, and ſo well affected to the cauſe of Chriſtianity as Euſebius was, with an impoſition of ſo groſs a nature; and more particularly ſince I find it impoſſible to divine any motive or cauſe which could have incited him to the commiſſion of ſuch an infamous fraud. No man does evil unadviſedly, or without ſome inducement. Keyſler, in the account of his travels, written in German, tom. ii. p. 29. ſays, that amongſt other ridiculous monuments of ſuperſtition exhibited to the credulous multitude at Rome, is ſhewn the picture which Chriſt ſent to Abgarus on the above-mentioned occaſion. But Beauſobre has demonſtrated this part of the ſtory to be void of all ſemblance of truth, in his *Diſſertation des Images de Main divine*, which is to be found in the *Biblioth. Germanique*, tom. xviii. p. 10, et ſeq.

that

that many more would have joined themſelves to him, had not the prieſts and lawyers, whoſe crimes and deceit he expoſed without reſerve, and rebuked with the utmoſt ſeverity, exerted all their influence, and made uſe of various arts and devices to prejudice the minds of a timid and fickle people againſt him. But it was not long that theſe enemies of Jeſus reſted content with giving vent to their animoſity merely in this ſhape. For, finding that it would be impoſſible for them to retain their credit and authority with the world, and the numerous advantages attendant thereon, in any other way than by the deſtruction of Chriſt, they began to lay ſnares for his life. Our bleſſed Saviour, perceiving himſelf to be thus beſet, had recourſe to the dictates of prudence, and by avoiding, both in his words and actions, as far as was conſiſtent with the nature of his function, every thing which might tend ſtill further to inflame the malice of theſe perfidious men, he for ſome time ſucceeded in rendering all their ſchemes abortive. Moreover, when he was at Jeruſalem, where there was every reaſon for him to be moſt apprehenſive of danger, his enemies were withheld from laying hands on him during the day by a fear of the people, who were well inclined towards him; and the place where he paſſed his nights was not known to any, except his intimate friends and companions. CENT. I.

X. Of theſe his companions, however, one was at length found, named Judas, who, bartering his ſalvation for money, agreed, for a reward of no great value, to diſcover the nightly retreat of his divine Maſter; who was, in conſequence thereof, ſeized on by a band of ſoldiers, and hurried away as a criminal to anſwer charges which involved his life. Betrayed thus infamouſly The death of Chriſt.

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mouſly into the hands of his enemies, our bleſſed Saviour was firſt led before the high prieſt and chief council of the Jews, by whom, without the leaſt ſhadow of juſtice, and merely on teſtimony of the moſt vague and contradictory nature, he was pronounced guilty of blaſphemy, and worthy of death. From thence he was taken to the tribunal of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, and accuſed of a crime totally different in its nature from that wherewith he had been firſt charged, and of which it had been his particular care to avoid incurring even the leaſt ſuſpicion, namely, attempting to excite ſedition and conſpiracy againſt Cæſar. Pilate, although he does not appear to have been over ſcrupulous in the adminiſtration of juſtice, yet diſcountenanced this accuſation, which he at once perceived to be founded in falſehood; and ſtrenuouſly exerted himſelf to ſave a man, for whom, on account of his wiſdom and ſanctity, it ſhould ſeem that he felt no little reſpect. Finding, however, after repeated efforts on the ſide of mercy, that the multitude, who were ſtirred up by the chief prieſts, would not be ſatisfied with any thing ſhort of the blood of Chriſt, but perſiſted to call for it with a tumultuous violence, approaching nearly to a ſtate of inſurrection, he was at length induced, though evidently with conſiderable reluctance, to comply with their demands, and paſſed on the meek and blameleſs object of their fury a ſentence of death. As our bleſſed Saviour had taken upon himſelf our nature with a view to expiate the ſins of mankind, and was conſcious that the divine councils and decrees had been ſatisfied by him, and that every purpoſe for which he took up his abode with man was fulfilled, he uſed no endeavours to ſkreen himſelf from

from this injurious treatment, but voluntarily ſubmitted to undergo the pain and ignominy of a capital puniſhment, and calmly breathed out his pure and ſpotleſs ſoul upon the croſs; praying, even in his agony, for the forgiveneſs of thoſe who were the mercileſs and unrelenting authors of his ſufferings [*u*]. CENT. I.

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XI. The body of Chriſt, being taken down from the croſs, was laid in a ſepulchre which

[*u*] It is manifeſt, from the hiſtory of the death of Chriſt, that he ſpake moſt truly when he ſaid, No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myſelf, John, x. 18. For how eaſy would it have been for him, even without a miracle, to have avoided falling into the hands of his enemies? The inſidious deſigns of the Jewiſh pontiff and chief prieſts were well known to him; and it is plain that he was no ſtranger to the treacherous intentions of his perfidious diſciple Judas, ſince he expreſsly alludes to them on more than one occaſion. On the other hand, it appears that he had ſeveral great and powerful friends, on whom he could have depended for ſupport. Would he but have quitted Jeruſalem, and returned into Galilee, every ſcheme that had been formed againſt him muſt have fallen to the ground. Indeed, even this was not requiſite: for his ſafety would have been completely ſecured, had he merely changed the place of his nightly reſort, and, leſt Judas ſhould have diſcovered it, diſmiſſed that wicked and deceitful man from his ſociety. Beſides theſe obvious means, there were others to which he might have had recourſe, and which would have proved equally efficient in defeating and bringing to nought the evil councils and deſigns of the Jewiſh prieſts and elders. But it ſhould ſeem that he diſdained, or at leaſt voluntarily neglected to avail himſelf of any of thoſe precautions, which a very moderate ſhare of human prudence would have ſuggeſted to any man under ſimilar circumſtances. He remained in Jeruſalem; he permitted Judas to continue about his perſon, in the character of an intimate friend; he continued to paſs his nights in the uſual and accuſtomed place. All theſe circumſtances being conſidered, who is there but muſt readily perceive that Chriſt voluntarily ſubjected himſelf to the puniſhment of death, and offered up his life to God as a ſacrifice for the ſins of mankind?

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Joſeph, one of the Jewiſh ſenators, had prepared for himſelf, where it remained until the third day. Early on the morning of that day, our bleſſed Saviour, according to his own prediction, again reſumed the life which he had voluntarily laid down; and by triumphantly riſing from the tomb, demonſtrated that the divine juſtice was ſatisfied, and the path which leads to immortality and life once more rendered eaſy of acceſs to the human race. During the ſucceeding forty days, he held frequent converſe with his diſciples, confirming their faith, and inſtructing them in the nature of thoſe important functions and duties which he deſigned them to fulfil. It is obſervable that, after his return to life, he ſhewed himſelf to none of his enemies. Amongſt other reaſons which he might have for this reſerve, it is probable that he foreſaw that even the appearance of one riſen from the dead would produce no ſalutary impreſſion on men, whoſe minds were not only blinded by malice, but corrupted by various popular ſuperſtitions reſpecting *manes* and ſpectres [*v*]. At the end of the above-mentioned period,

[*v*] The motives which withheld our Saviour from ſhewing himſelf to any except his diſciples, after his reſurrection from the dead, ha[illegible] been ſought after with more than ordinary diligence by the learned; inaſmuch as the enemies of Chriſtianity have, for ages, urged this circumſtance as a reaſon for calling in queſtion the truth of his return to life. Now to me it appears that the reaſons which influenced Chriſt on this occaſion are readily to be collected from the anſwer which he puts into the mouth of Abraham, in reply to Dives, who had requeſted that Lazarus might be ſent to his brethren from the dead: "If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead." Luke, xvi. 30. For, unleſs I am altogether deceived, we ought to conſider this anſwer as conveying a prophetical intimation in regard to the point before us;—much as if our bleſſed Saviour had added: "In

period, having aſſembled his diſciples, and commanded them to go and preach the goſpel unto all nations, he bleſſed them, and riſing ſublimely from the earth, was in their preſence received up into heaven. CENT. I. His reſurrection and aſcenſion into heaven.

" In like manner, there can be no hope whatever that thoſe, whom I may have in vain endeavoured to convert by all the force of divine eloquence, and by exhibiting to them ſo many ſtupendous proofs of infinite power, during my life, ſhould be brought to believe in me even by my riſing from the dead. I ſhall not, therefore, ſhew myſelf to my enemies after my reſurrection; ſince I am certain that my doing ſo would be productive of no good effect." At leaſt, I think it muſt readily be granted me, that the reaſon which Abraham gives why no good was to be expected from the miſſion of Lazarus, applies moſt aptly and forcibly to the ſubject before us. Many arguments of conſiderable weight might be urged in ſupport of the propoſition, which I conceive is thus to be deduced from the anſwer of Abraham; but I will content myſelf with bringing forward one only. The Jews had accuſed our Saviour, during his life, of holding converſe with the prince of the devils, and making uſe of magic. In addition to this, the minds both of the Jews and the Romans were, at that time, poſſeſſed with an idea that the *manes* or ſouls of the dead might be called up from the grave by magical incantation; and that, without this, the ſpirits of the departed did not unfrequently, either of their own accord, or by command of the prince of darkneſs, again reviſit this earth, and ſhew themſelves to the living under an aërial form. Amongſt men who entertained notions like theſe, the appearance of our Saviour after his reſurrection could have wrought no good effect. Had Chriſt, after his return to life, appeared openly in the temple, or in other places of public reſort, ſuch as the palace of the Roman governor, and the Jewiſh ſenate, it is more than probable that his enemies would not only themſelves have regarded the circumſtance in an unfavourable light, but alſo perſuaded the multitude either that the unhappy ſpirit of Chriſt had been again raiſed up by ſome or other of his diſciples who were verſed in the arts of magic, or that, being itſelf filled with indignation, and unable to reſt, on account of the violent means by which it had been ſeparated from its earthly abode, it was come back for the purpoſe of, in ſome meaſure, avenging itſelf by haunting and terrifying mankind.

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Effuſion of the Holy Spirit on the apoſtles.

XII. Thoſe whom Chriſt had ſelected as above mentioned to be the witneſſes of his life and acts, and the meſſengers of his goſpel to the world, were not, at the time of his aſcenſion, endowed with powers adequate to the diſcharge of the important functions with which they were inveſted. Having, therefore, again reſumed his ſtation in glory, and ſat down at the right hand of the everlaſting Father, he, about the fiftieth day from the time of his death, ſent down on them from above, according to his promiſe, the divine power and gifts of the Holy Spirit [*w*]. In conſequence of this miraculous effuſion, their minds became irradiated with celeſtial light, their faith acquired ſtrength, their knowledge of the will of their divine Maſter was rendered more perfect, and they were inſpired with a zeal and fortitude which armed them againſt every difficulty that it was neceſſary to encounter in his ſervice, and enabled them, in the execution of his commands, to triumph even over death itſelf. One of the moſt aſtoniſhing of the endowments thus beſtowed by our Saviour on his apoſtles, was an inſtantaneous acquaintance with languages of which they were previouſly ignorant, ſo as to qualify them to inſtruct the different nations of the earth in their own proper tongues [*x*].

XIII. Inſpired

[*w*] Acts, ii. 1.

[*x*] Amongſt the various gifts of the Holy Spirit communicated to the apoſtles, I do not include the faculty of altering the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, or, in other words, the working of miracles: for I muſt confeſs, I cannot at all comprehend how a faculty like this, which requires infinite power, could be communicated to men. The miracles which the apoſtles appeared to work were, as I conceive, wrought by Chriſt himſelf, on their invocation; and, therefore, when he promiſed them the power of effecting what men and angels could not accompliſh, I imagine nothing more

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XIII. Inspired with the requisite confidence and powers by this communication of succour from above, the apostles entered on their ministry without delay; endeavouring, first of all, as they had been commanded, to convert the inhabitants of Jerusalem to a faith in Christ, and then directing their efforts to the propagation of his gospel amongst the remainder of the Jewish nation [y]. Nor were these their first exertions chilled by any thing like a want of success: for within a very short period, the flock of Christ, which, at the time of his departure, could not be considered otherwise than as small and weak, was augmented and strengthened by the accession of many thousands of Jews. It appears that by one sermon alone of Peter's, three thousand, and that by another, five thousand were added to the Christian community in this its infancy [z]. A preference having been thus given to the Jews, the apostles, in compliance with the express commands of our Saviour, next extended the blessings of their ministry to the Samaritans [a]. At

The gospel preached first to the Jews and Samaritans, and then to the rest of the world.

more was implied than that he would be always present to their prayers, and ready to effect, through the infinite power which he possessed, whatever might in any case appear to be expedient or necessary. Peter commanded the lame man to rise up and walk, and immediately he arose and walked. Acts, iv. 6. But I cannot by any means believe that, on this occasion, an energy or power residing in Peter was transferred into the bodily frame of this poor wretch, so as to produce the restoration of his nerves or muscular action; or that the apostle could, by a mere act of volition, accomplish this wonderful cure. No; it is not to Peter, but to our blessed Saviour himself, on whose name Peter called, that this miraculous restoration of the cripple ought, in my opinion, to be ascribed. In confirmation of this, see the words of Jesus himself, John, xiv. 12, 13.

[y] Luke, xxiv. 47. Acts, i. 8. xiii. 46.

[z] Acts, ii. 41. iv. 4.

[a] Acts, i. 8. viii. 14.

CENT. I. length, having continued for many years at Jeruſalem [*b*], and given a due degree of ſtability

The goſpel preached firſt to the Jews and Samaritans, and then to the reſt of the world.

[*b*] That the apoſtles continued at Jeruſalem for many years after the aſcenſion of our Saviour, is manifeſt from their Acts, which were written by St. Luke; nor can it be doubted that their ſtay there was in conſequence of the divine command. The reaſons on which this divine mandate was founded are, I think, readily to be perceived. In order to eſtabliſh the Chriſtian commonwealth on a firm and durable baſis, and to furniſh the churches which were about to be planted in the different nations of the earth with a model after which they might form themſelves, it was requiſite that the firſt Chriſtian aſſemblies ſhould be conſtituted and inſtructed with great care, under the immediate eye of the apoſtles themſelves. An affair of ſuch magnitude, it will be allowed, muſt neceſſarily have required a conſiderable time for its accompliſhment. But to this reaſon was added another of ſtill greater conſequence and weight, which imperiouſly demanded the preſence of the apoſtles at Jeruſalem. For being inveſted, as they were by Chriſt himſelf, with the entire guardianſhip and adminiſtration of the concerns of his religion, the other diſciples who were employed in eſtabliſhing churches in Judæa, Samaria, and the neighbouring territories, were of courſe ſubject to their direction, and conſequently felt it their duty, in all affairs of difficulty or doubt, to recur to them for advice and inſtruction. But how could theſe inferior meſſengers of divine truth have conſulted the apoſtles, or availed themſelves of their inſtruction or commands, if the latter had departed from Jeruſalem at an early period, and diſtributed themſelves about in various parts of the world? The general intereſts of Chriſtianity, therefore, required that thoſe whom our bleſſed Saviour had appointed the judges, or, as we ought perhaps rather to ſay, the arbiters of divine matters, and to whom he had given the power of regulating and determining every thing relative to the eſtabliſhing of his religion, ſhould for a certain time remain together in one place, that ſo an eaſy acceſs to them might be had by thoſe who were likely to ſtand in need of their advice or aſſiſtance; and their orders and decrees poſſeſs an additional weight and authority, from its being known that they compriſed the ſentiments, not merely of one or two, but of the whole collective body of thoſe who had been admitted to a more particular intimacy with Chriſt, and were the beſt inſtructed in his will. How long

bility and ſtrength to the ſeveral Chriſtian fraternities or churches which had been formed in Paleſtine, they proceeded to communicate the glorious light of the goſpel to the different Gentile nations of the earth; and in the various regions through which they travelled, were ſucceſsful in eſtabliſhing the church of Chriſt to an extent and with a rapidity that are, in every reſpect, truly aſtoniſhing. CENT. I.

XIV. The firſt concern of the apoſtles, after our Saviour's aſcenſion into heaven, was to render their number complete according to its firſt eſtabliſhment, by electing a man of ſuperior worth and ſanctity to ſupply the place of Judas, who had periſhed by a miſerable death. Having, therefore, gathered together the ſmall aſſembly of Chriſtians which had been formed in Jeruſalem, two men diſtinguiſhed for their ſanctity and faith in Chriſt were propoſed as candidates on this occaſion; the one named Barſabas, the other Matthias. The whole aſſembly then joined in devout prayer to God, that their choice might not, through human frailty, fall on that man of The election of a new apoſtle.

long the apoſtles thus continued at Jeruſalem, and in what particular year from the time of our Saviour's leaving them they departed on that miſſion to the Gentile nations with which they were charged, is by no means certain. According to an ancient report quoted by Euſebius from Apollonius, a writer of the ſecond century, our Saviour ordered his apoſtles to remain at Jeruſalem for twelve years after his parting from them. Euſeb. *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. v. cap. xviii. p. 186. and Clemens Alexandr. *ex Prædicatione Petri, Stromat.* lib. vi. cap. v. p. 762. Conſidering the great antiquity of this account, it may perhaps be not altogether undeſerving of credit; but, at the ſame time, we cannot help regarding it with ſome ſuſpicion, ſince it is certain that, even in the earlieſt ages of Chriſtianity, it was no uncommon thing for men to fill up the chaſms of genuine hiſtory with fictitious conceits, the mere ſuggeſtions of their own imagination.

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The election of a new apoſtle.

the two which was leaſt acceptable in his ſight; after which, proceeding to the election, they either by lot, or rather, as I ſuſpect, by the ſuffrages of ſuch Chriſtians as were preſent, choſe Matthias to fill the office of a twelfth apoſtle [c].

XV. All

[c] Acts, i. 15, et ſeq. Many things highly worthy of obſervation preſent themſelves to notice, in the account which St. Luke gives us of the appointment of Matthias in the room of Judas. Paſſing over, however, other things which might be pointed out, I will, in this place, merely make a few remarks on the mode and form of the election. All the commentators agree in repreſenting Matthias as having been choſen an apoſtle by lot, agreeably to the ancient Jewiſh practice. On a more attentive conſideration, however, of the words of the ſacred hiſtorian, I rather think it would be found that this commonly received interpretation of them is what they by no means authorize. St. Luke commences his account by ſtating, that Peter, in a ſuitable ſpeech, pointed out to the people who were aſſembled the neceſſity of electing a new apoſtle. After this, at verſe 23, he adds, that two men equal to the ſtation were ſet forth in the midſt, in order that one of them might be choſen to undertake the office. As to the perſons by whom theſe men were produced and recommended, he is quite ſilent. His words are ſimply καὶ ἔστησαν δύο: but I have not the leaſt doubt that we ought, in this place, to conſider the word Ἀποστόλοι as meant to be underſtood. For who can poſſibly believe that the Chriſtians of the ordinary rank, who were in ſo many reſpects inferior to the apoſtles, ſhould have aſſumed to themſelves the right of ſelecting two of their own order, and recommending them as fit for the apoſtleſhip? I therefore conſider it as certain, that the apoſtles made the ſelection of theſe two perſons from amongſt the general body of Chriſtians at that time reſident in Jeruſalem, and directed the aſſembly at large to chooſe one of them for an apoſtle. The narrative concludes with an account of the manner in which this mandate was complied with; deſcribing it as follows: καὶ ἔδωκαν κλήρους αὐτῶν, καὶ ἔπεσεν ὁ κλῆρος ἐπὶ Ματθίαν, v. 26. Now in this paſſage, all the commentators attribute ſo much force to the word κλῆρος, which properly ſignifies a lot, that they unanimouſly conſider the true interpretation of the firſt branch of the ſentence to be, *et jecerunt ſortes eorum*, "and they caſt their lots;"

XV. All these apostles were uninformed, illiterate men. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, indeed, lots;" and hence conclude that Matthias was chosen by lot. But to me it appears that this interpretation is entirely repugnant to the Greek idiom: for whenever the casting of lots is spoken of by the Greek writers, we constantly find the verb βάλλειν joined with κλῆρος; and therefore, if St. Luke had meant to indicate what these commentators suppose, he would have written καὶ ἔβαλον κλῆρον, or κλήρους, and not ἔδωκαν, which latter word was never, at least as far as I know, applied in this way. It was equally unusual for the Greek writers to add the pronoun αὐτῶν after κλῆρος, when the latter was used by them in the sense of a lot that was thrown. They say simply, with Homer, ἔβαλον κλήρους, "they cast lots." And certainly, what occasion there could be for St. Luke to add this pronoun in the passage under consideration, if he was speaking of casting lots, I am quite at a loss to conceive. All the commentators refer it, and, consistently with their interpretation of the passage, could only refer it to the candidates for the apostleship, Matthias and Barsabas. But in what sense could those lots be said to be theirs, which, if the above opinion be just, were thrown in that assembly? Correctly speaking, can the lots, by which an election is to be determined, be termed the lots of the candidates or persons to be elected? Considering the weight of these and other objections, which oppose themselves to the commonly received interpretation of the above passage, I cannot help thinking that in these words of St. Luke we ought to understand the term κλῆρος as having the same signification with ψῆφος, viz. *a suffrage*, or what in common language is termed *a vote*; and that what he meant to say was simply this, "and those who were present gave their votes." In this case, it will be perceived that for αὐτῶν I should substitute ἀυτῶν. Considering this to have been the mode which was adopted for the appointment of a new apostle, it would, in a very striking degree, correspond with the form which was observed by the most ancient Christian churches, in electing their teachers and pastors; and which, in my opinion, there is every reason to think was founded on the manner of proceeding to which the apostles had recourse on this occasion. When a presbyter or a bishop was to be elected, those who presided over the church proposed certain candidates for the office, of approved worth and ability. Of these the assembly

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indeed, their minds had become fully irradiated with celeſtial light; but to any other ſort of wiſdom than that which is from above, they had no pretenſions; neither were they at all inſtructed in any of the different branches of human learning. In the then infancy of the Chriſtian church, however, it was abſolutely requiſite that, in addition to theſe, there ſhould be ſome one appointed who might be able to repreſs the domineering ſpirit of the Jewiſh doctors, by encountering them with their own weapons; and alſo be qualified, if occaſion ſhould require, to enter the field of diſputation with the advocates and ſupporters of the various ſyſtems of pagan philoſophy. Our bleſſed Saviour, therefore, revealing himſelf from heaven in a very wonderful manner to a young man of the name of Saul, but who afterwards changed it for that of Paul, appointed him a thirteenth

ſembly at large pointed out by their ſuffrages, and not by lot, him whom they deemed the moſt deſerving; and whoever had the majority of votes in his favour, was conſidered as elected through divine preference. Such was the form obſerved by the primitive churches, and I conceive ſuch to have been the form to which the apoſtles had recourſe on the above-mentioned occaſion; and that the greater number of thoſe who conſtituted the then infant church of Jeruſalem gave their ſuffrages for Matthias, in preference to his companion Barſabas. The word κλῆρος, in the latter part of the paſſage under conſideration, does not mean a lot, but the office or function with which Matthias was inveſted; τῆς διακονίας, which muſt be underſtood as annexed to it in order to render the ſenſe complete, being omitted for the ſake of brevity. To perceive at once the force of the term in this place, we need only imagine St. Luke to have ſtudied conciſeneſs leſs, and written καὶ ἔπεσεν ὁ κλῆρος (τῆς διακονίας ταύτης) ἐπὶ Ματθίαν; the ſenſe of which in Engliſh is, "and the office of that miniſtry (*i. e.* the apoſtleſhip) fell on Matthias." In what I have thus ſaid, I do not pretend to any thing like infallibility, but merely propoſe a conjecture, which appears to me to have no ſmall degree of probability on its ſide, for the conſideration of the learned.

apoſtle.

apoſtle. Saul, who was a Jew, a native of Tarſus in Cilicia, and belonged to the ſect of the Phariſees, had been endowed by nature with great and excellent mental powers, and was eminently ſkilled in every kind of Jewiſh learning. He was alſo converſant with the literature and philoſophy of the Greeks. Led away by prejudice and warmth of temper, he was at firſt the bitter perſecuting enemy of Chriſt and his flock; but as he journeyed on a certain time towards Damaſcus, with power from the high prieſt to ſeize on any Chriſtians whom he might find there, and bring them bound to Jeruſalem, he was on a ſudden ſtruck to the earth, and ſo affected by the voice and power of our Saviour, that he became at once a convert to his cauſe, devoting himſelf wholly to it, and, with the utmoſt cheerfulneſs and fortitude, expoſing himſelf to innumerable hardſhips and dangers on account thereof, throughout the whole courſe of his future life [*d*]. In how great a degree every intereſt of Chriſtianity was promoted by the exertions of this illuſtrious and admirable character, how many churches he founded throughout the greateſt part of the Roman empire, how numerous and how formidable the contentions and perils which he encountered and overcame, his own epiſtles which are ſtill extant, and the hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles written by St. Luke, abundantly teſtify.

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XVI. In the accounts which have been given by various writers, of the labours, the travels, the miracles, and the deaths of the apoſtles, there is little that can be altogether depended on, except what is recorded in the books of the New Teſtament, and a few other monuments of great

Of the labours, martyrdom, &c. of the apoſtles.

[*d*] Acts, ix. 1, et ſeq.

antiquity.

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Of the labours, martyrdom, &c. of the apoſtles.

antiquity. In this caſe, as in moſt others of doubt and uncertainty, a difference of opinion prevails as to what ought to be received, and what rejected. For my own part, I think that we cannot well withhold our credit from ſuch particulars as ſtand ſupported by the clear and poſitive teſtimony of Origen, Euſebius, Gregory Nanzianzene, Paulinus, Jerome, Socrates, and certain of the more ancient writers who are cited with approbation by Euſebius; but as to any thing that is to be met with merely in the writings of uncertain authors, or thoſe of a later age, I ſhould ever feel inclined to receive it with conſiderable heſitation and diſtruſt, unleſs it ſhould happen to be corroborated by documents that admit of no diſpute. For when once certain of the Chriſtian writers had been unfortunately tempted to have recourſe to fiction, it was not long before the weakneſs of ſome and the arrogant preſumption of others carried forgery and impoſition to an extent, of which it would be difficult to convey to the reader any adequate idea. Amongſt various other things that I conſider as having been too readily received upon truſt reſpecting the apoſtles, I cannot help including thoſe accounts which have been handed down to us of their having, for the moſt part, undergone violent deaths; although I am well aware, that the fact of their having ſuffered in this way is commonly conſidered as eſtabliſhed beyond diſpute [e].

XVII. Amidſt

[e] That every one of our Saviour's apoſtles, except St. John, (who ended his days in the natural way at Epheſus,) underwent capital puniſhment by command of the civil magiſtrate, is a report that appears to have been regularly tranſmitted down from very early ages, and is ſupported by the

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XVII. Amidſt all the uncertainty, however, in which the hiſtory of the apoſtles is involved, it appears the teſtimony of many different writers. The opinion that ſuch was the fact has, moreover, taken ſuch deep root even in the minds of many who would not willingly be thought either credulous or uninformed, that whoever may venture either to call it in queſtion, or oppoſe it, muſt run no inconſiderable riſk of being accounted hoſtile to the fame and reputation of thoſe divine characters. In what I am about to ſay, it is far from my wiſh to caſt any reflection on thoſe who may have eſpouſed this opinion; but I muſt, at the ſame time, claim for myſelf the liberty of remarking, that the evidence on which they reſt their proof of the fact, that the major part of the apoſtles underwent violent deaths, is by no means ſo concluſive as they ſeem to imagine. That Peter, and Paul, and James ſuffered in this way, is what, on the faith of ſo many ancient authorities, I am very ready to admit; but there are ſeveral conſiderations which combine to prevent me from believing that their colleagues periſhed by the ſame untimely fate. My doubts are founded, in the firſt place, on the teſtimony of Heracleon, a very ancient author of the ſecond century, a Valentinian indeed by profeſſion, but moſt evidently neither an ill-informed nor incautious writer, who, as quoted by Clement of Alexandria, (*Stromat.* lib. iv. cap. ix. p. 595.) expreſsly denies that Matthew, Philip, Thomas, Levi, and ſome others, were put to death, in conſequence of their having made open profeſſion of their faith in Chriſt in the face of the civil power. Heracleon is arguing againſt an opinion which was entertained by certain of the Chriſtians of that age, that the ſouls of martyrs alone were received up into heaven after death; and contends, that thoſe who had never been called upon to lay down their lives for the cauſe of Chriſt, but had merely continued ſtedfaſt in faith and holineſs of life, would equally, on the diſſolution of the body, be admitted to the manſions of the bleſſed. This opinion he ſupports by the examples of the above-mentioned apoſtles, whom, with many others, he concludes to have been exalted to a ſeat in heaven, although they were never put to the teſt of making an open profeſſion of their faith in Chriſt before an earthly tribunal, and ſealing it with their blood Οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ σωζόμενοι ὡμολόγησαν τὴν διὰ τῆς φωνῆς ὁμολογίαν, καὶ ἐξῆλθον. Ἐξ ὧν Ματθαῖος, Φίλιππος, Θωμᾶς, Λευΐς, καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοί. *Non enim omnes qui ſalvi facti ſunt, eam* (Chriſti) *confeſſionem, quæ*

Churches founded by the apoſtles.

CENT. I. appears to be placed beyond a doubt that they travelled throughout the greateſt part of the then

Martyrdom of the apoſtles.

quæ per vocem (apud magiſtratus) *ediderunt, et poſt eam ex vita exceſſerunt. Ex quibus eſt Matthæus, Philippus, Thomas, Levis, et multi alii.* Clement of Alexandria, who makes a quotation from Heracleon, of which this paſſage forms a part, although he takes occaſion in ſome reſpects to condemn and reject what he thus brings forward, yet never once intimates the leaſt objection to the above cited words of that author reſpecting the apoſtles: a circumſtance which plainly indicates that he did not conſider them as open to any exception. To this twofold teſtimony may be added others of no leſs authority. The apoſtle Philip is clearly excepted out of the claſs of martyrs by Polycrates, who ſtates him to have died and been buried at Hierapolis. *Epiſtola ad Victorem* apud Euſebium *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. v. cap. xxiv. p. 191. Baronius, indeed, *Annal.* tom. i. ad ann. 35. § 141. and many others after him, would have us to underſtand Polycrates as ſpeaking of that Philip who was one of the ſeven deacons of the church at Jeruſalem, and not of Philip the apoſtle. But the advocates of this notion ſtand confuted by Polycrates himſelf, who ſays expreſsly that the Philip of whom he makes mention was one of the twelve apoſtles. But there is an argument of ſtill greater force and weight to be brought forward on this ſubject,—an argument, indeed, nearly ſufficient of itſelf to eſtabliſh the point for which I contend; and that is, that all the writers of the firſt three centuries, including thoſe moſt ſtrenuous advocates for the honour and dignity of the martyrs againſt the Valentinians, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, reckon no more than three of the apoſtles as coming within the claſs of martyrs, namely, Peter, Paul, and James the great. Tertullian ſays, *Quæ tamen paſſos apoſtolos ſcimus, manifeſta doctrina eſt: hanc intelliga ſolam acta decurrens.—Quod Petrus cæditur, quod Stephanus opprimitur, quod Jacobus immolatur, quod Paulus diſtrahitur, ipſorum ſanguine ſcripta ſunt. Et ſi fidem commentarii voluerit hæreticus, inſtrumenta imperii loquuntur, ut lapides Jeruſalem. Vitas Cæſarum legimus: orientem fidem Romæ primus Nero cruentavit. Tunc Petrus ab altero cingitur, quum cruci adſtringitur. Tunc Paulus civitatis Romanæ conſequitur nativitatem, quum illic martyrum renaſcitur generoſitate. Hac ubicumque legero, pati diſco: nec mea intereſt, quos ſequar martyrii magiſtros, ſenſuſne an exitus apoſtolorum.*

Scorpiace,

then known and civilized world, and within a short time, either by themselves, or with the assistance

Scorpiace, cap. xv. p. 633. edit. Rigaltii. If these words of Tertullian be attentively considered, they will be found to militate strongly against the opinion of those who have been led to believe that all the apostles, except St. John, suffered violent deaths. Tertullian is contending with the Valentinians, who, as we hinted above, denied that there was any necessity of laying down one's life for Christ, and maintained that those of his servants who continued stedfast in faith and holiness of life would obtain salvation equally with the martyrs. To this opinion Tertullian opposes the example of the apostles, who were known to have exposed themselves to sufferings of various kinds in the cause of Christ, and not to have refused encountering even death itself for his sake. Now if, at that time, even the slightest rumour had prevailed amongst the Christians, that all the apostles of our Lord had sealed their testimony with their blood, this author, who appears to have been never backward in availing himself of vulgar report, would most assuredly have brought it forward on this occasion. On the contrary, however, he with more than ordinary caution contents himself with naming merely three of the apostles as martyrs, *viz.* Peter, Paul, and James. It is, therefore, fairly to be presumed that he knew of no more; and if he knew of no more, we may rest assured that the Christians of that age were apprised of none besides: for if any one had been able to add to the above list, it must have been Tertullian, who was thoroughly conversant with every part of Christian history, true as well as feigned. Tertullian, indeed, does not attempt to conceal his ignorance of any other of the apostles that could be deemed martyrs. He was a man by no means wanting in penetration or judgment, and was fully aware that the Valentinians, his opponents, might reply, that only a few of the apostles suffered martyrdom,—so few indeed, that even he himself had not been able to swell the list beyond three. With a view, therefore, to preclude them from parrying the force of his argument in this way, he adds, *Nec mea interest quos sequar martyrii magistros, sensusne an exitus apostolorum:* words which, it must, I think, be allowed, make strongly in favour of the point for which I contend. For the meaning intended to be conveyed by them is obviously this: "It can be of no avail for you to object, that a few only of the apostles underwent

Martyrdom of the apostles.

CENT. I. ſiſtance of certain of their diſciples who accompanied them in their travels, and ſhared their labours,

Martyrdom of the apoſtles.

violent deaths. I do not take upon me to controvert this. It is ſufficient for me to have proved that I have the general ſenſe of the apoſtles on my ſide, inaſmuch as they were both ready and willing to have died for the cauſe of Chriſt. But few of them, indeed, were called to ſo ſevere a trial of their conſtancy; but there can be no doubt that it was the meaning and deſire of them all to glorify their divine Maſter by their death. The general ſenſe, then, of theſe illuſtrious characters I take as my guide; and, after their example, I deſire to die for the ſake of Chriſt, although I am aware that the deaths of the major part of them were different from what they had thus expected and deſired." Influenced by theſe and other conſiderations, I am induced to think that the accounts which have been handed down to us, reſpecting the martyrdom of our Saviour's apoſtles, were invented ſubſequently to the age of Conſtantine the Great. That ſuch accounts ſhould have been invented, may readily be accounted for on two grounds. Firſt, the incredible veneration in which the martyrs were held;—a veneration which had been carried to a great height even in the earlier ages of Chriſtianity, but which increaſed beyond all meaſure upon the reſtoration of tranquillity to the Chriſtian commonwealth by Conſtantine. For when the martyrs came to be worſhipped almoſt like gods, and to have all thoſe honours paid to them which it was cuſtomary for the Greeks and Romans to offer to their demigods and heroes, it might of courſe be thought neceſſary to include the apoſtles within this claſs, leſt they ſhould appear to want that which was conſidered as the moſt diſtinguiſhing and infallible mark of ſanctity and glory. Secondly, the ambiguity attached to the word *martyr* might occaſion ignorant men to invent accounts of their tragical deaths. *Martyr*, in the Greek language, ſignifies any ſort of witneſs: but the term was applied by the Chriſtians in a more eminent ſenſe to that kind of witneſs, who placed it beyond all doubt that Chriſt was the centre of all his hopes, by ſealing his teſtimony with his blood. The apoſtles are denominated μάρτυρες, witneſſes, in the former ſenſe, by Chriſt himſelf. Acts, i. 8. And the term has evidently no higher import annexed to it, when applied, as it afterwards is, by the apoſtles to themſelves, by way of elucidating the nature of their functions. Acts, ii. 32, &c. It might, however, very eaſily happen that

labours, eſtabliſhed churches dedicated to Chriſt in almoſt all the provinces [*f*]. But even here we are precluded from giving ſcarcely any thing beyond this general ſtatement of the fact: the great obſcurity which hangs over nearly every part of the early hiſtory of Chriſtianity not only preventing us from marking with preciſion the extent of the apoſtles' progreſs, but alſo rendering it impoſſible for us, with any degree of confidence, to name any particular churches as founded by them, except ſuch as are mentioned in the writings of the New Teſtament [*g*]. Throughout the world there is ſcarcely, not to ſay a nation or people, but even a city of any magnitude or conſequence, in which the religion of Chriſt may be ſaid to flouriſh, that does not aſcribe the firſt planting of its church to one or other of the apoſtles themſelves, or to ſome of their im-

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that unlearned perſons, not aware of this diſtinction, might conceive that the word martyr, which they found thus applied to the apoſtles in the writings of the New Teſtament, was to be underſtood in the latter ſenſe; and in conſequence thereof, haſtily adopt the opinion that they ought to be placed in the ſame claſs with thoſe whom it was uſual for the Chriſtians to ſtyle, in a more eminent ſenſe, martyrs.

[*f*] That the apoſtles ſhould have made their way to parts of the earth which at that time were not civilized, nor even known, is what I ſhould think could ſcarcely be believed by any one. The weight is vaſt which thoſe take on their ſhoulders, who would fain perſuade us that the various accounts which carry the apoſtles to America, as well as to Sweden, Denmark, and Lapland, and even make them penetrate into the interior of Africa, are conformable to truth.

[*g*] A liſt of thoſe churches founded by the apoſtles, of which mention is made in different parts of the New Teſtament, is given by Hartman in his work *de Rebus geſtis Chriſtianorum ſub Apoſtolis*, cap. vii. p. 107.; as alſo by Fabricius, in his *Lux Evangelii toti Orbi exoriens*, cap. v. p. 83, et ſeq.

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mediate and moſt intimate diſciples. But no reliance whatever can be placed on traditions of this ſort; ſince it has been pretty clearly aſcertained, that the ſame ſpirit of vain glory which prompted ancient nations to pronounce themſelves the offspring of the ſoil, or the deſcendants of the gods, found its way into the churches of Chriſt, and induced many of them to ſuppreſs the truth, and claim for themſelves a more illuſtrious origin than in reality belonged to them [*b*].

XVIII. But

[*b*] Amongſt the European nations, there is not one that does not pride itſelf on being able to attribute the firſt foundation of its church either to one of the apoſtles, or of the ſeventy diſciples, or to ſome holy perſonage bearing an apoſtolic commiſſion. The Spaniards boaſt of having had the light of the goſpel communicated to them by two of the apoſtles in perſon, *viz.* St. Paul and St. James the Great, as well as by many of the ſeventy diſciples, and of thoſe who were the companions of the apoſtles: and it would be far from prudent for any one who wiſhes to cultivate the good will of theſe people, to attempt to undeceive them in this reſpect. The French, with equal oſtentation and pertinacity, attribute the converſion of their forefathers to the preaching and labours of Creſcent, the diſciple and companion of St. Paul, of Dionyſius of Athens the Areopagite, of Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and I know not of how many others. Throughout Italy, there is ſcarcely a city which does not pretend to have received the firſt rudiments of Chriſtianity from either Paul or Peter; and that its firſt biſhop was appointed by one or other of theſe. Vid. Giannone *Hiſtoire civile du Royaume de Naples*, tom. i. p. 74, 75. And it would be hardly poſſible, indeed I may ſay it would be altogether impoſſible, for any one to eſcape the imputation of hereſy, who ſhould venture in any way to indicate his diſbelief of this. Vid. Jo. Lami *Deliciæ Eruditorum*, tom. viii. Præf. p. xxxv, xxxvi. and tom. xi. Præfat. The Germans affirm that Maternus, Valerian, and many others were ſent to them by the apoſtles; and that the perſons thus commiſſioned by St. Peter and his colleagues eſtabliſhed ſome conſiderable churches in their country. The

XVIII. But the labours of the apoſtles, in the cauſe of their divine Maſter, were not reſtricted merely

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inhabitants of Britain conſider St. Paul, Simeon Zelotes, Ariſtobulus, and particularly Joſeph of Arimathea, as the founders of their church. That the former of theſe actually extended his travels to that iſland, and firſt preached the goſpel there, is a fact which has been ſtrongly contended for by many, who chiefly rely on the authority of a paſſage in the firſt epiſtle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians. The Ruſſians, with the Poles and Pruſſians, venerate St. Andrew as the parent of their reſpective churches. All theſe things, and many others which I ſhall paſs over, were conſidered as indiſputable during thoſe benighted ages, when every ſpecies of ſound learning, divine as well as human, was overwhelmed and trodden under foot by ignorance and ſuperſtition. At preſent, however, they are regarded in a very different light; and the wiſeſt and beſt informed ſcholars give them up for the moſt part as fictions, invented ſubſequently to the age of Charlemagne, by illiterate and deſigning men, who expected that by thus propagating a notion of the great antiquity of their ſeveral churches, they ſhould open to themſelves a ſource of profit as well as honour Vid. Calmet, *Hiſtoire de Lorraine*, tom. i. p. xxvi. Le Beuf, *Diſſertations ſur l'Hiſtoire de France*, tom. i. p. 192, 193. 198; and others. In one particular, perhaps, as we ſhall preſently take occaſion to point out, this opinion may not be ſtrictly correct; but in every other reſpect it meets with the unreſerved aſſent of all of the preſent day, who prefer truth to the authority of antiquity; and is expreſſed with much neatneſs and force of illuſtration, by that eminently learned French writer Jo. Launois, in a diſſertation, in which he undertakes the defence of a paſſage in Sulpitius Severus reſpecting the firſt martyrs of Gaul, and which is to be found in the ſecond volume of his works, part i. p. 184. His words are, *Media ætate orta eſt inter eccleſias ſuper antiquitate originum ſuarum contentio et certa quædam æmulatio, quæ fecit, ut cum* ſimplicem veritatem ultro oblatam facile proferre poterant, *ait Damianus*, fategerint, ut mendacia cum labore confingerent. *Etenim dum reconcinnarunt pleraque primorum epiſcoporum acta, nunc adſtipulante nominum ſimilitudine, Trophimum puta Arelatenſem, et Paulum Narbonenſem, qui ſub Decio venerant in Galliam, cum Trophimo et Paulo Sergio, Pauli apoſtoli ſectatoribus confuderunt: nunc eadem vel alia de cauſa Rufum, e Macedonia Avenionem, et*

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Lazarum e Cypro Maſſiliam traduxerunt, nunc alios a ſecundo vel tertio eccleſiæ ſæculo revocarunt ad primum, eoſque Petri vel Clementis diſcipulos et nobilibus ortos parentibus, quos ſæpe nominant, affirmarunt: nunc etiam alios conſtituerunt, de quibus per antiquæ traditionis teſtes, qui ante Caroli Magni tempus floruerunt, nihil licet quicquam pronuntiare. To the juſtneſs of this ſtatement, ſo far as it goes, I moſt readily ſubſcribe; but as to what is further imagined by many of the learned, that it was not until after the age of Charlemagne that the European churches began to contend with each other reſpecting the antiquity of their foundation, and, in direct violation of the truth, to refer their origin to the apoſtolic age, I conceive that it admits of ſome doubt. To me it appears that thoſe prepoſterous attempts to carry back the origins of churches even to the times of the apoſtles, and to give them a venerable air by trumping up the moſt idle tales of their extreme antiquity, are of much older date than the age of Charles the Great: indeed I have not a doubt but that this ſilly ſort of emulation had taken poſſeſſion of the minds of both the Greeks and the Latins, even ſo far back as the age of Conſtantine. That this opinion of mine may not have the appearance of being adopted haſtily, or on inſufficient grounds, I will ſupport it by an example drawn from the hiſtory of Gregory of Tours, a writer of the ſixth century;—an example which muſt certainly be allowed to ſtand in no danger of ſuffering by a compariſon with the moſt wonderful of any of theſe wondrous tales; indeed, of ſo marvellous a complexion, as to call for a ſtretch of credulity to which I rather think but few, if any, of us are equal. The narrative occurs in Gregory's book *de Gloria Martyrum*, cap. xii. p. 735. and is as follows: *Tunc temporis a Galliis matrona quædam Hieroſolymis abierat, pro devotione tantum, ut Domini et ſalvatoris noſtri præſentiam mereretur. Audivit autem quod beatus Johannes decollaretur: curſu illic rapido tendit, datisque muneribus ſupplicat percuſſori ut eam ſanguinem defluentem colligere permitteret non arceri: illo autem percutiente, Matrona concham argenteam præparat, truncatoque martyris capite, cruorem devota ſuſcipit: quem diligenter in ampulla poſitum, patriam detulit et apud Vaſatenſem urbem, ædificata in ejus honorem eccleſia, in ſancto altari collocavit.* Now I will take upon me to aſſert, that ſuch a fooliſh, ſuch a mad conceit as this, in which the

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to the communication of oral inſtruction, or to the uſe of ſuch other means as promiſed to be inſtrumental in promoting the edification of thoſe of their own age. The welfare of future generations was likewiſe the object of their ſolicitude; and they accordingly made it a part of their concern to commit to writing a code of teſtimony and inſtruction, of which the whole human race might avail itſelf in all ages to come: the Holy Spirit, to whoſe influence and guidance their minds were in every reſpect ſubject, doubtleſs prompting them to the undertaking. St. Matthew with his own hand wrote a hiſtory of the life and actions of Chriſt, as did alſo St. John; and St. Peter and St. Paul reſpectively dictated ſimilar hiſtories to St. Mark and St. Luke [*i*]. Certain

the people of Bazadois gloried long before the age of Charlemagne, never entered into the brain of any monk ſubſequently to that period. For theſe people, we ſee, were willing to have it believed that their church exiſted prior to the death of our Saviour; having, according to the above ſtatement, been founded not long after the death of John the Baptiſt, by a certain devout woman on her return from Paleſtine, whither ſhe had been induced to go by the fame of Chriſt's miracles. But even this was not enough: they muſt carry the matter ſtill farther, and pretend that this pious woman actually built the church at Bazas in Guienne before Chriſt's death, dedicated the altar therein with Chriſtian rites, and placed on that altar the blood of St. John. To ſuch an high and incredible antiquity none other of the Chriſtian churches ever made pretenſion, except that of Jeruſalem, which was inſtituted by Chriſt himſelf. The people of Bazadois, however, to my certain knowledge, even yet cheriſh this error, conſidering their honour as in no ſmall degree involved in the maintenance of it. Such ridiculous extravagance naturally reminds one of the Arcades, who anciently boaſted that their race was older than the moon.

[*i*] That St. Mark wrote his hiſtory of Chriſt from the dictation of St. Peter, is a fact that ſtands ſupported by

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Certain epiſtles alſo, in which are compriſed the leading principles of Chriſtianity, and various precepts or rules of life, were addreſſed by St. Paul, St. James, St. Peter, St. John, and St. Jude, to the churches which they had eſtabliſhed in different parts of the world. At no very great diſtance of time from the age of the apoſtles, the Chriſtians, with a view to ſecure to future ages a divine and perpetual ſtandard of faith and action, collected theſe writings together into one volume, under the title of The New Teſtament, or The Canon of the New Teſtament. Neither the names of thoſe who were chiefly concerned in the making of this collection, nor the exact time of its being undertaken, can be aſcertained with any degree of certainty; nor is it at all neceſſary that we ſhould be preciſely informed as to either of theſe particulars: it is ſufficient for us to know that it may be proved by many ſtrong arguments, that the principal parts of the New Teſtament had been collected together before the death of St. John, or at leaſt not long after that event [*k*].

XIX. To

thoſe great and highly reſpectable authorities, Papias, apud Euſebium *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iii. cap. xxxix.; Irenæus, *adv. Hæreſes*, lib. iii. cap. i.; Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, and others. That St. Luke derived the materials of his hiſtory from St. Paul is alſo aſſerted by Irenæus, lib. iii. cap. i.; Tertullian, *contra Marcionem*, lib. iv. cap. v.; and others. It is, therefore, not without reaſon that St. Paul and St. Peter are termed by ſome the original authors of the goſpels of St. Luke and St. Mark.

[*k*] The inſidious attempt made by Toland, in his *Amyntor*, to undermine the divine origin and authority of the canon of the New Teſtament, gave riſe to very warm diſputes amongſt the learned; and many different opinions were, in conſequence thereof, brought forward reſpecting the authors of that collection, and the time when it was made. For which, ſee Jo. Ens in his *Bibliotheca ſacra, ſeu Diatriba de Librorum Novi Teſt. Canone, Amſtelod.* 1710, 8vo.

CENT. I.

The apoſtles' creed.

XIX. To theſe writings of the apoſtles it might be proper to add that formulary of faith, which is commonly known by the name of the apoſtles' creed, if any reaſonable grounds appeared to warrant that notion reſpecting its origin, which obtained pretty generally in the Chriſtian world ſubſequently to the fourth century, and which is entertained by many even at this day, namely, that it was drawn up by the apoſtles themſelves, before they departed from Jeruſalem on their miſſion to the Gentiles [*l*]. But to ſay nothing of the ſilence of all the moſt ancient writers as to this point, and equally paſſing over the fact that this formulary was not uniformly adopted by the Chriſtian churches, which would moſt undoubtedly have been the caſe, had they known it to have been dictated by ſuch high authority; omitting, moreover, to lay any ſtreſs on the cir-

8vo. Jo. Mill in his *Prolegomena ad Nov. Teſtament*, ſect. i. p. 23, et ſeq. and Jo. Frickius *de Cura veteris Eccleſiæ circa Canonem Nov. Teſtamenti*, a ſmall work of conſiderable erudition publiſhed at Ulm. To me it appears that after all that has been brought forward on the ſubject, the matter remains in great meaſure undecided. The moſt general opinion ſeems to be, that the books of the New Teſtament were originally collected together by St. John: an opinion for which the teſtimony of Euſebius (*Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iii. cap. xxiv.) is very confidently quoted as an indiſputable authority. But it is to be obſerved, that allowing even the higheſt degree of weight to the authority of Euſebius, nothing farther can be collected from his words, than that St. John approved of the goſpels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, and added his own to them by way of ſupplement. Concerning any of the other books of the New Teſtament, Euſebius is entirely ſilent.

[*l*] See what has been with much induſtry collected on this ſubject by thoſe highly reſpectable writers: Jo. Franc. Buddeus, in his *Iſagoge ad Theologiam*, lib. ii. cap. ii. § ii. p. 441.; and Jo. Georg. Walchius, in his *Introductio in Libros ſymbolicos*, lib. i. cap. ii. p. 87.

CENT. I. cumſtance of its having never been received or accounted as a part of the apoſtolic writings; it is alone a ſufficient refutation of this opinion, that we know for certain that this creed was at firſt extremely ſhort; and that it was afterwards, by little and little, extended and dilated, according as new errors from time to time ſprang up in the Chriſtian community [*m*]. No one ſurely will maintain, that we ought to regard that as a genuine formulary of faith preſcribed by the apoſtles, which can be proved to have been amplified in ſeveral reſpects ſubſequently to their death.

Cauſes to which the quick propagation of Chriſtianity muſt be aſcribed.

XX. The ſyſtem of diſcipline which the apoſtles, by the authority and command of their divine Maſter, employed themſelves in propagating throughout the world, was not only repugnant to the natural diſpoſition and inclinations of mankind, but alſo ſet itſelf in direct oppoſition to the manners, the laws, and the opinions of all the different nations of the earth: and as for the perſons themſelves who were ſelected to be the propounders of it, they were altogether rude and unſkilled in any of thoſe arts by which the human mind is to be rendered docile, and brought to yield aſſent and obedience. It is impoſſible, therefore, to account for the aſtoniſhingly rapid propagation of the Chriſtian religion amongſt ſo many different nations, part of them of a ſavage and ferocious character, and part entirely

[*m*] That ſuch was the fact has been clearly demonſtrated by Sir Peter King, in his *Hiſtory of the Apoſtles' Creed, with critical Obſervations on its Articles*, London, 1702, 8vo. This work was tranſlated into Latin by Gothofred Olearius, and firſt printed at Leipſig, 1704, in 8vo.; a ſecond edition was ſome time afterwards publiſhed at Baſle.

devoted

devoted to licentiouſneſs and ſloth, otherwiſe than by receiving with implicit credit the accounts which are given us, by profane as well as ſacred writers, of the miraculous gifts by which the apoſtles were diſtinguiſhed; namely, that they poſſeſſed a faculty of perſuaſion more than human, that they predicted future events, laid open the ſecrets of men's hearts, held the operations of nature in controul, enacted wonders beyond the reach of any human power, and laſtly, were capable of tranſmitting theſe ſupernatural endowments to any on whom they thought proper to confer them, ſimply by the impoſition of their hands on them, accompanied with prayer. Let theſe things be conſidered for a moment as falſe, and we ſhall at once find how utterly out of our power it is to aſſign any rational cauſe that could have prevailed on ſo large a portion of mankind, within ſo ſhort a period, to turn their backs on the allurements of pleaſure, to forſake the religion of their anceſtors, and voluntarily to embrace Chriſtianity, at the hazard of life, fortune, honour, and every thing elſe that could be dear to them [*n*]. CENT. I.

XXI. Our

[*n*] It is certainly a very ill-adviſed attempt, and a diſgraceful abuſe of talents, for any one to pretend to account for that wonderful revolution in the ſentiments and affairs of mankind, which was thus brought about by a mere handful of illiterate Jews, from mere natural cauſes. There are, however, ſeveral who, eſpouſing the principles of Hobbes and others, perſiſt in contending that the uncommon degree of benevolence and charity towards the poor and the miſerable, by which the early Chriſtians were diſtinguiſhed, operated as a lure in bringing over great multitudes of the neceſſitous, and others of the lower claſs of people, to the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, under the expectation of having their wants relieved, and being enabled, through the munificence of others, to paſs the remainder of their days in in-

activity

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XXI. Our opinion in regard to this point is not at all ſhaken by the arguments of thoſe, who, after

The early Chriſtians for the moſt part of low condition.

activity and eaſe. But ſurely this is a very unwarrantable ſporting with reaſon. For if ſuch were the motives by which the poor and the indigent were influenced, yet by what incentive—by what inducement could thoſe be ſtimulated to become Chriſtians, out of whoſe abundance the neceſſities of the poor and the indigent were ſupplied? But can it be neceſſary to inform thoſe who maintain this opinion, that the idle and the ſlothful had no place amongſt the firſt Chriſtians; and that St. Paul commands, "that if any would not work, neither ſhould he eat?" 2 Theſſ. iii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Can it be neceſſary to inform them, that the lazy, the vicious, and the ſenſual, were, by order of the apoſtles, to be expelled from the Chriſtian community? Can it be neceſſary to inform them, that every Chriſtian family was charged with the maintenance of ſuch of its own members as were in need; and that thoſe alone were relieved at the public expence, who had no relatives capable of yielding them aſſiſtance? 1 Tim. v. 3. 16, &c. Equally ſuperficial and futile is the reaſoning of thoſe, who would perſuade us that great numbers were induced to embrace Chriſtianity, on account of the infamous lives led by the heathen prieſts, and the many extravagant abſurdities by which the various ſyſtems of paganiſm were characteriſed. Motives of this ſort might indeed ſo far influence men of ſound ſenſe and principle, as to cauſe them to renounce the religion of their anceſtors: but in no ſhape whatever could they operate as inducements for them to embrace a new ſyſtem, which called upon them to reſtrain and mortify their natural propenſities; and the profeſſion of which expoſed their lives, their reputation, and every thing elſe that could be deemed valuable by them, to the moſt imminent danger. Others there are who imagine that the virtues by which the apoſtles and the earlieſt converts to Chriſtianity were ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed, ſuch as their continence, their contempt of this world's goods, their fortitude, their patience, and the like, had that effect on the generality of mankind, that they were readily prevailed on to adopt them as their inſtructors and guides in the road to ſalvation. Great indeed, I am ready to allow, is the effect which eminent probity and virtue have on the minds of men: nor would I be thought to inſinuate that the exemplary lives of the apoſtles had no weight with thoſe whom they converted

after the example of Celſus, Julian, Porphyry, and other ancient adverſaries of Chriſtianity, call upon us to recollect that the firſt Chriſtian aſſemblies or churches formed by the apoſtles conſiſted of men of low degree, of ſervants, labourers, artificers, and women; in ſhort, that they CENT. I.

converted to a faith in Chriſt. But all of us who are acquainted with what we are ourſelves, and what human nature is, muſt be well aware that, although purity of morals and innocence of life may excite the reſpect and veneration of mankind, they will not often produce imitation under any circumſtances,—and hardly ever, if it be manifeſt that ſuch imitation would be attended with ignominy and danger. We need not be told that virtue itſelf, and that even of the moſt exalted kind, is commonly regarded in an unfavourable light, if it require men to renounce the principles and opinions in which they were bred, to abandon their pleaſures, and caſt off habits to which they have been long attached. And certainly nothing leſs than this is taught us by the examples of the apoſtles, who, from the purity of their morals, are ſaid to have overcome the world. Indeed, were further proof wanting, the matter is placed beyond all doubt by the example of the Lord and Maſter of the apoſtles himſelf, whoſe whole life exhibited one uninterrupted courſe of ſanctity and innocence. That the pure and inoffenſive lives led by the apoſtles might ſo far operate in favour of their cauſe, as to ſecure them in ſome degree from perſonal violence or injury, is what I can very readily bring myſelf to believe: but that the ſtrictneſs of their morals and demeanor, and their contempt of this world's goods, ſhould alone have been ſufficient to cauſe many thouſands of men to believe in that Jeſus, who was crucified by the Romans at the inſtigation of the Jews, as the Saviour of the human race;—induce them ſedulouſly to form themſelves after the apoſtolic model;—and finally, inſpire them with the reſolution to die rather than renounce the principles which they had thus embraced, is what I am certain no one poſſeſſed merely of ordinary powers will ever prevail on me to admit. And to paſs over many other things, let me only by way of concluſion aſk, to what ſource or to what cauſes are we to aſcribe that aſtoniſhing virtue and ſanctity in the apoſtles, by which it is pretended to account for the unanimity and eagerneſs diſplayed by ſuch vaſt multitudes, in laying hold on Chriſt as the only anchor of ſalvation?

were

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were wholly compoſed of uninformed illiterate perſons, poſſeſſed of neither wealth nor dignity, and who were, of courſe, eaſily to be wrought upon and managed by any one even of very moderate abilities. For, in the firſt place, what they thus ſo confidently preſs on our attention is not a correct repreſentation of the fact; ſince we are expreſsly taught in Scripture, that amongſt thoſe who were converted by the apoſtles to a faith in Chriſt were many perſons of wealth, rank, and learning [*o*]. And, in the next place, it is well known to every one who has had the

[*o*] The apoſtles, in their writings, preſcribe rules for the conduct of the rich as well as the poor, for maſters as well as for ſervants: a convincing proof, ſurely, that amongſt the members of the churches planted by them were to be found perſons of opulence and maſters of families. St. Paul and St. Peter admoniſh Chriſtian women not to ſtudy the adorning of themſelves with pearls, with gold and ſilver, or with coſtly array. 1 Tim. ii. 9. 1 Peter, iii. 3. It is therefore plain, that amongſt the early Chriſtians, there muſt have been women poſſeſſed of wealth adequate to the purchaſe of bodily ornaments of great price. St. Paul exhorts the Chriſtians to beware of the philoſophy of the Greeks, and alſo of that oriental ſyſtem which was ſtyled γνωσις. 1 Tim. vi. 20. Col. ii. 8. Hence it is manifeſt that amongſt the firſt converts to Chriſtianity there were men of learning and philoſophers, who wiſhed to temper and improve, as they thought, the doctrine of our bleſſed Saviour, by incorporating with it the precepts of their own wiſdom. For if the wiſe and the learned had unanimouſly rejected the Chriſtian religion, what occaſion could there have been for this caution? St. Paul's remark, that amongſt the members of the church of Corinth were not to be found many of the noble or the mighty, (1 Cor. i. 26.) unqueſtionably carries with it the plaineſt intimation that perſons of rank and power were not wholly wanting in that aſſembly. Indeed, liſts of the names of various illuſtrious perſons who embraced Chriſtianity, in this its weak and infantine ſtate, are given by Blondell, at page 235. of his work *de Epiſcopis et Preſbyteris*; alſo by Wetſtein, in his Preface to Origen's Dialogue *contra Marcionitas*, p. 13.

leaſt experience in human affairs, that men even of the loweſt claſs not only inherit from nature, in common with their ſuperiors, the warmeſt attachment to life, and whatever may contribute to their own well-being, but are alſo in a far greater degree bigotted to, and conſequently much more jealous over, the cuſtoms, opinions, and religious principles handed down to them from their anceſtors, than thoſe of intelligent and cultivated minds, who are poſſeſſed of wealth and authority, and fill the higher ſtations in life [p]. CENT. I.

XXII. That the apoſtles, in accompliſhing the objects of their miſſion, derived no inconſiderable aſſiſtance from the great fame of their divine Maſter, which ſoon ſpread itſelf far and wide, and thus preceded them in their journies, admits of little or no doubt. Authors of no mean credit aſſure us that, before the departure of the apoſtles from Jeruſalem, the fame of the wonders wrought by Chriſt in the land of Judea had Chriſt held in great eſtimation by the Gentiles.

[p] Ignorance and fear generate and nouriſh ſuperſtition. By how much the more any one's mind is weak and unenlightened, by ſo much the ſtronger hold will ſuperſtitious influence be found to have on it. With a much better proſpect of ſucceſs, therefore, if ſuperſtition ſtand in your way, may you undertake to convince ten men than one woman, or a hundred ſenſible and well-informed people than ten of ſuch as are ignorant and ſtupid. Vicious inclination never predominates more ſtrongly than in ſervants and perſons of the lower claſs; and with far greater eaſe may you extinguiſh evil propenſities in ſix hundred well-born perſons of ingenuous mind, than in twenty ſervants or people of the common order. In my opinion, therefore, if the fact would bear out the adverſaries of Chriſtianity in what they thus ſo confidently urge, that the churches founded by the apoſtles were made up of men of no account, of low and illiterate characters, ſervants, women, and the like, it would rather tend to augment than diminiſh the reputation and glory of thoſe divine teachers.

extended

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extended itſelf throughout a great part of the world, or at leaſt of the Roman empire, and impreſſed many with the higheſt eſtimation of his character. It is even ſaid that ſome of the Roman emperors themſelves entertained an honourable reſpect for his name, his doctrine, and his acts. Indeed, if Tertullian and ſome others may be credited, Tiberius, who was in other reſpects a moſt execrable tyrant, conceived ſuch an eſteem for the character of our Lord, that it was his intention to have aſſigned him a place amongſt the deities publicly worſhipped by the Roman people; but that the deſign fell to the ground, in conſequence of its being oppoſed by the ſenate. There have not, indeed, been wanting amongſt the learned ſome who conſider this as altogether a fabrication; but, on the other hand, men, by no means inferior to theſe in point of erudition, have brought forward ſeveral arguments in its ſupport, which, as it appears to us, are not eaſily to be anſwered [*q*].

XXIII. The

[*q*] Euſebius relates (*Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. vii cap xviii. p. 265.) that many amongſt the heathens had procured images of our Saviour, and his apoſtles, and which were preſerved by them in their houſes with great care and reverential regard: a ſtriking proof that the Gentiles had been early brought acquainted with the character of Chriſt, and held it in great reſpect. The Carpocratians, a celebrated Gnoſtic ſect of the ſecond century, exhibited, according to Irenæus, both ſtatues and pictures of our Saviour, and ſaid that Pilate had cauſed a likeneſs to be painted of him. Lib. i. *contra Hæreſes*, cap. xxv. p. 105. edit. Maſſvet. Concerning the favourable diſpoſition manifeſted by the Roman emperors towards the Chriſtian religion, there is a notable paſſage cited by Euſebius, *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 148. from the apology addreſſed by Melito of Sardis to Marcus Antoninus, on behalf of the Chriſtians; in which he intimates, that the anceſtors of the emperor had not only tolerated the Chriſtian religion, in common with other

XXIII. The very great and daily accelerating progreſs of Chriſtianity was, however, contemplated with the utmoſt jealouſy and apprehenſion by the Jewiſh prieſts and rulers, who plainly perceived that if the people ſhould be prevailed on to embrace this new religion, the law of Moſes would no longer retain its dignity, and there

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other ſyſtems, but had alſo treated it with conſiderable honour and reſpect. Ἦν καὶ ὁ πρόγονος σοῦ πρὸς ταῖς ἄλλαις θρησκείαις ἐτίμησαν. Quam ſectam majores tui una cum cæteris religionibus coluerunt. The ſame author adds, that Nero and Domitian were the only emperors who had ever ſuffered themſelves to be ſo far influenced by the ſuggeſtions of wicked and malevolent adviſers, as to conceive an ill opinion of the Chriſtian religion, and favour the cauſe of its adverſaries. If Melito be correct in what he thus ſays, that it was the counſel of evil diſpoſed perſons which cauſed Nero to perſecute the Chriſtians, it ſhould ſeem that John of Antioch might have ſome reaſon for ſtating, as he does, (*in Excerpt. Valeſian.* p. 808, et ſeq.) that Nero, at his firſt acceſſion to the purple, was well inclined to the cauſe of Chriſt, and favoured the Chriſtians. Tertullian (*in Apologetic.* cap. v. p. 57. ed. Havercamp.) ſpeaks of the intention of Tiberius to have aſſigned our Saviour a place amongſt the deities of Rome, as of a thing publicly and commonly known. The circumſtance is repeated after him by Euſebius, Oroſius, and others; all of them appearing to rely chiefly on the authority of Tertullian. Vid. Franc. Baldvin. *Commentar. ad Edicta veterum principum Romanorum de Chriſtianis*, p. 22, 23. Alb. Fabric. *Lux Evangelii toti Orbi exoriens*, p. 221. Some of the moſt learned men, however, of the preſent day conſider this as altogether incredible; deeming it impoſſible to reconcile ſuch an intention, either with the diſpoſition of Tiberius, or with the ſtate of the Roman empire at that period. In what way, and to what extent the arguments brought forward by thoſe who take this ſide of the queſtion have been met and anſwered by men of no leſs learning and ingenuity on the oppoſite ſide, may be ſeen in a curious work of Theod. Haſæus, *de Decreto Tiberii quo Chriſtum referre voluit in Numerum Deorum*, Erfurt, 1715, in 4to.; as alſo in a French Letter of J. Chriſt. Iſeleus, which is pregnant with deep erudition, and printed in the *Biblioth. Germanique*, tom. xxxii. p. 147. and tom. xxxiii. p. 12.

would

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would conſequently at once be an end of their authority, and of the many emoluments and advantages of which they contrived to make it the ſource. They, therefore, oppoſed the doctrine of Chriſt with all imaginable violence and rancour; and availing themſelves of every favourable opportunity to lay hold on his apoſtles and their diſciples, they threw them into priſon, where they were threatened and ſcourged, and had every other ſpecies of evil heaped on them without reſerve: ſome of them being even made to undergo capital puniſhment. Of the malevolence and injuſtice which the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity thus experienced at the hands of the Jews, abundant teſtimony is left us on record by St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apoſtles. The moſt eminent amongſt thoſe who ſuffered death at Jeruſalem for the cauſe of Chriſt were Stephen, a very devout man, whom the Jews ſtoned [r]; St. James the apoſtle, the ſon of Zebedee, whom Herod Agrippa put to the ſword [s]; and St. James the Juſt, the biſhop of the church at Jeruſalem, who was ſlain in a cruel manner, as is ſhortly noticed by Joſephus [t], but deſcribed more at large by Hegeſippus [u]; in whoſe account,

[r] Acts, vii. 55.

[s] Acts, xii. 1, 2.

[t] *Antiquit. Judaic.* lib. xx. cap. viii. or, according to Havercamp's diviſion, cap. ix. p. 976.

[u] *Apud* Euſeb. *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. ii. cap. xxiii. The exceptions which are, not without reaſon, taken by the learned to this account of Hegeſippus are all brought into one view, and augmented with ſome additional obſervations of his own, by Joh. Le Clerc, in his *Hiſtoria Eccleſ. duorum primorum ſæculorum*, p. 414, et ſeq. Even Joſ. Aug. Orſi himſelf, in his *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory*, a work of much elegance, written by him in Italian, tom. i. p. 237, et ſeq. frankly confeſſes that it is not poſſible even for the moſt

count, however, there are many things to which no one, who is in the ſmalleſt degree converſant with

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moſt credulous perſon to believe every thing related by Hegeſippus; and pronounces the account given by Joſephus, who repreſents James as having been ſtoned to death, as much more deſerving of credit. For my own part, I muſt decline entering into a diſcuſſion of the numerous difficulties which give an air of improbability to the narrative of Hegeſippus; but ſince the occaſion preſents itſelf, I will juſt offer a few remarks, which may perhaps be found to throw ſome light on one paſſage in it, of which the learned have hitherto profeſſed themſelves utterly at a loſs to comprehend the meaning. The Jews, according to Hegeſippus, propoſed this queſtion to James the Juſt: τις ἡ θύρα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ? Quodnam eſt oſtium Jeſu? What is the gate or door of Jeſus?—To which he is repreſented as anſwering, that this gate was the Saviour: καὶ ἔλεγε, τοῦτον εἶναι τὸν Σωτῆρα. Euſebius *ubi ſupra.* Now it is truly wonderful to behold how erudition has bewildered itſelf in attempts to diſcover the meaning of this queſtion. Hen. Valeſius, in his notes on Euſebius, p. 39, ſays, Oſtium, hoc loco eſt introductio, ſeu inſtitutio atque initiatio. Oſtium igitur Chriſti nihil eſt aliud quam fides in Deum Patrem, et in Filium, et in Spiritum Sanctum. In this explanation it ſhould ſeem as if the learned author fancied that he had given us ſomething very great; whereas, in fact, he has given us nothing: for his interpretation neither accords with the queſtion of the Jews, nor with the anſwer of James. Admitting this notion of Valeſius to be correct, the Jews muſt have meant to aſk of James, What is faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? But who, let me aſk, can poſſibly attach any ſuch ſenſe to the words they are ſtated to have made uſe of—Quodnam eſt oſtium Jeſu? What is the Gate of Jeſus? And what relation to ſuch a queſtion as the above is to be diſcovered in the anſwer of James?—Oſtium hoc eſt Servator. The Saviour is the gate. Is the Saviour then a faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Indeed it is plain that Valeſius himſelf was by no means ſatisfied with this explanation; for within a very few words after, we find him at variance with himſelf, and giving the paſſage a very different interpretation: *Chriſti oſtium*, ſays he, *eſt remiſſio peccatorum, quæ fit per Baptiſmum.* This expoſition, we ſee, is of quite a different nature from the one cited above, but yet not at all more rational or intelligible.

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with either Chriſtian or Jewiſh antiquities, can by any means give credit.

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ligible. The Jews, according to this interpretation, muſt be underſtood to have aſked of James—*Quænam eſt remiſſio peccatorum per baptiſmum?* What is remiſſion of ſins by baptiſm? To which he anſwers—*Remiſſio peccatorum eſt Servator.* Remiſſion of ſins is the Saviour. But I again repeat what I ſaid above. This eminent ſcholar no doubt meant to throw light on this very obſcure paſſage, and probably pleaſed himſelf with the notion that he had done ſo; but, in fact, he has done nothing of the kind: indeed it may be ſaid, that he has thrown additional obſcurity over a place already of itſelf ſufficiently dark. In my opinion, Jo. Le Clerc purſued a much wiſer courſe, by ingenuouſly confeſſing his inability to explain this paſſage as it ſtands, and intimating a ſuſpicion that it muſt have been ſome how or other corrupted. *Quod quid ſibi velit,* ſays he, *non intelligo, neque enim Græcum hoc eſt, nec Hebraiſmum ullum ſimilem comminiſci poſſum. Reſpondet enim Jacobus, hunc eſſe Servatorem, quaſi θύρα ſignificaret munus aut quidpiam ſimile. Sed forte locus eſt corruptus. Hiſtor. Eccleſ. duorum primor. Sæculor.* p. 416. Le Clerc perceived that this paſſage in Hegeſippus required correction, but he would not undertake the amendment himſelf. This, however, has been not long ſince attempted by a learned French author, who, in 1747, publiſhed at Paris, in 4to., a proſpectus *d'une nouvelle Traduction de l'Hiſtorien Joſeph.* According to this writer, p. 9. the term θύρα, which has been all along conſidered as Greek, and rendered into Latin by the word oſtium or porta, ought in fact to be conſidered as an Hebraiſm; and the way in which he propoſes to correct the paſſage in queſtion is by ſubſtituting תורה, Torah, for θύρα, or rather by changing the latter into θόρα. This conjecture is noticed by the learned editors of the *Nova Eruditorum Acta* at Leipſig, in their number for March 1750, p. 142.; and they appear to conſider it as a peculiarly happy one. *Eſt tamen,* ſay they, *una inter cæteras conjectura, ſcita felicis ingenii filia; quam calculos peritorum hominum laturam eſſe, nulli dubitamus.* The emendation thus offered is, I muſt own, entitled to every ſort of praiſe on the ſcore of ingenuity; but, at the ſame time, I cannot go the length of ſaying that I deem it altogether unobjectionable, and free from doubt; ſince it appears to me in no ſhape to accord with the anſwer of James. Were we to adopt the ingenious

XXIV. Moreover, not content with thus accumulating every possible injury on such of the harmless

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genious correction proposed by this author, the question of the Jews would be this—*Quænam est lex Jesu?* What is the law of Jesus? But what sort of reply to this is conveyed by the answer of James, which, according to the same emendation, must be translated—*Lex Jesu est Servator.* The law of Jesus is the Saviour. What sense, or meaning would there be in this? or, in what way can it be regarded as an answer to the question proposed? Is James trifling with the Jews, or does he give them the desired information? Let us leave this conjecture then, and see if it may not be possible to suggest an emendation more consentaneous to the object which the Jews evidently had in view. Now I entirely agree in opinion with the above-mentioned learned French author, that, in rendering the Hebrew words made use of by the Jews in the questioning of James, into Greek, a mistake was made by the translator, whoever he might be, whether Hegesippus or another, and that the object of their inquiry was entirely misconceived by him. But it strikes me, that the error is rather to be discovered in the name Ἰησοῦ, than in the term θύρα. The Jews manifestly had it in view to learn from James what he deemed the way or the gate of salvation, or, in other words, the true means of obtaining eternal life. I have, therefore, not the least doubt but that, speaking in their vernacular tongue, they made use of the term יְשׁוּעָה, Jeschuah, salvation; and that their question to James consequently was—What is in your opinion the gate of salvation? By what means may we arrive at eternal life? But the Greek translator, either through inattention, or for want of sufficient skill in the Hebrew language, mistaking this term for the proper name of our Saviour Jesus, instead of rendering the question, as he ought to have done, τίς ἡ θύρα τῆς σωτηρίας; What is the gate or door of salvation?—translated it, τίς ἡ θύρα Ἰησοῦ; What is the gate of Jesus? To the question, when corrected in this way, nothing can be conceived more pertinent or apposite than the reply of James—The gate or door of salvation is our Saviour Jesus Christ: for, in fact, he answers in our Saviour's own words, who, in John, x. 7. says of himself, Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ θύρα τῶν προβάτων; I am the door of the sheep. Indeed the event of this examination tends so strongly to corroborate this conjecture of mine, that I rather think it will be considered as having every probability

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harmleſs diſciples of Chriſt as were to be found in Paleſtine, the high prieſt and rulers of the Jews diſpatched legates or miſſionaries into all the different provinces, for the purpoſe of animating their diſtant brethren with ſimilar ſentiments of jealouſy and hatred towards the Chriſtians, and ſtirring them up to ſeek for every occaſion of annoying and perſecuting this inoffenſive flock [*v*]. By what is recorded in the Acts of the Apoſtles, and other ancient authorities, it appears that the Jews, throughout every part of the world, diſcovered the utmoſt readineſs in obeying this call of their ſpiritual inſtructors and governors, and with one conſent made it their endeavour, by various calumnies and infamous machinations, to draw on the Chriſtians the indignation and ill-will of the preſidents, the magiſtrates, and the people at large. The chief of all the accuſations wherewith the followers of Chriſt were loaded by the malice of theſe their inveterate foes, was that of their being enemies to the ſtate, and conſpirators

Enmity of the foreign Jews excited againſt the Chriſtians.

on its ſide. "On hearing this," (*i. e.* the anſwer of James,) continues Hegeſippus, "ſome of them were prevailed on to believe in Jeſus as the true Chriſt." Now if the anſwer of James had that effect on the Jews, as to perſuade them to believe that Jeſus was the Chriſt or Meſſiah,—it follows of neceſſity that he muſt have declared Jeſus to be the author, or, in figurative language, the gate or the door of ſalvation.

[*v*] Frequent mention is made of this by the early Chriſtian writers. See Juſtin Martyr *Dial. cum Tryph.* p. 51, 52, 53. 318. edit. Jebb. It is alſo intimated at p. 109. that the Jews forbad their people even from ſpeaking to the Chriſtians; and at p. 138. 207. that in their ſchools and ſynagogues, the followers of Chriſt were loaded by theſe infuriate perſecutors with the direſt curſes and imprecations: a circumſtance of which we find mention alſo made by St. Jerome and others. See alſo Euſebius *Comment. in Eſaiam*, cap. xviii. p. 474.; in Montfaucon's *Nov. Collect. Patrum Græcor.* tom. ii.

againſt

againſt the imperial majeſty: in proof whereof, it was alleged that they regarded one Jeſus, a malefactor, who had been put to death by Pilate on very ſufficient grounds, as a monarch ſent down to mankind from above. To this conduct are to be attributed the many complaints that we meet with in the writings of the early Chriſtians, reſpecting the hatred and cruelty of the Jews, whom they repreſent as more inimical and malicious in their carriage towards them than even the pagans themſelves [*w*]. CENT. I.

XXV. An effectual check, however, was given to the inſatiable rancour with which the Jews thus perſecuted the Chriſtians, about the ſeventieth year from our Lord's birth, when Divine Juſtice delivered up their land, their city, and their temple, to be laid waſte and overthrown, and even their name as a nation to be utterly blotted out, by the Romans under Veſpaſian and his ſon Titus. This tremendous ſcene of carnage, ruin, and devaſtation, which had been foretold by our Saviour himſelf, is very particularly deſcribed by the hiſtorian Joſephus, who was preſent at the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and for the moſt part an eye-witneſs of all its attendant horrors. The cauſe which, beyond all others, may be conſidered as having more immediately contributed to bring down theſe heavy calamities on the Jewiſh nation, was the mal-adminiſtration of the Roman preſidents, to whom the government of Paleſtine had been from time to time committed, and particularly of Geſſius Florus, whoſe oppreſſive and vexatious conduct was every way cal- Overthrow of Jeruſalem and the Jewiſh nation.

[*w*] See the paſſages collected by J. A. Fabricius, in his *Lux Evangelii toti Orbi exoriens*, cap. vi. § 1. p. 121. See alſo *Epiſtola Smyrnenſis Eccleſiæ de Martyrio Polycarpi*, § xii, xiii. tom. ii. *Patr. Apoſtol.* p. 199, 200.

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culated to exhauſt the patience of this wretched and unfortunate people. Irritated and goaded by inſults and ſeverities, to which they ſaw no proſpect of an end, they endeavoured to regain their former liberty; but their efforts, inſtead of promoting the object they had in view, ſerved only to accelerate their final ruin, by rendering them at one and the ſame time a prey to inteſtine faction and the Roman ſword. In the courſe of a ſeven years' war there periſhed of this ill-fated people, according to Joſephus, either by fire, the ſword, famine, peſtilence, or different kinds of puniſhments, no leſs a number than one million three hundred and thirty-ſeven thouſand four hundred and ninety. In the fourth year of this memorable conteſt, the city of Jeruſalem was taken, after a ſix months' ſiege, and the temple, contrary to the wiſh of the emperor Titus, conſumed by fire. The buildings that eſcaped the ravages of the flames were afterwards pulled down, and levelled with the ground. Throughout the whole hiſtory of the human race, we meet with but few, if any, inſtances of ſlaughter and devaſtation at all to be compared with this. In contemplating it, amongſt various other things which preſent themſelves to our notice as well deſerving of the moſt ſerious attention, it is particularly worthy of remark that the Jews themſelves, rather than the Romans, muſt be conſidered as the authors of that great and tremendous accumulation of evils which ſignalized this final deſolation of the houſe of Iſrael.

Overthrow of Jeruſalem and the Jewiſh nation.

XXVI. About two years before the breaking out of this war between the Romans and the Jews, the Chriſtians who dwelt at Rome were made ſubject to very unjuſt laws, and otherwiſe experienced the moſt ſevere and iniquitous treatment

The ten perſecutions of the Chriſtians.

ment at the hands of the emperor Nero. His example was, in this respect, pretty uniformly copied after by his successors, during three centuries; although their severity was not always carried to the same extent: and hence the professors of Christianity had to endure a long series of dire afflictions, or, to use a more familiar term, persecutions, to which an end was not put until the time of Constantine the Great. We have been for ages in the habit of considering the number of these persecutions as decidedly fixed at ten; but the early history of Christianity does not appear by any means to warrant this. If it be meant to speak merely of such persecutions as were particularly severe, and of general extent throughout the empire, they certainly did not amount to ten; if, on the contrary, the lesser ones, or such as may be termed provincial, are designed to be included, it is equally clear that they exceeded that number. The persons who first fixed the number at ten, certainly found nothing on record to authorize their doing so; but were, as it should seem, led away by a wish to make history, in this respect, accommodate itself to certain passages of Scripture, in which they imagined it to be foretold that just so many persecutions would befal the Christians [*x*].

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The ten persecutions of the Christians.

XXVII. As

[*x*] The notion of the Christians suffering exactly ten persecutions under the different heathen emperors, is without doubt extremely ancient, and may be traced back as far as to the fifth century. But notwithstanding this, I will venture to incur the responsibility of assuring all lovers of truth, that it is wholly built on popular error, without the least shadow of foundation. The authors of it are indeed unknown; but thus far is certain, that they did not derive this opinion from what was to be met with on record, but first of all imbibed it from a mistaken interpretation of Scripture, and then obtruded it on the world as a point of

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XXVII. As the Romans allowed to every citizen the free exerciſe of his own reaſon and judgment

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hiſtory. We have good authority for ſtating that, in the fourth century, the number of Chriſtian perſecutions had not been exactly aſcertained. Lactantius, in his book *de Mortibus Perſequutorum*, enumerates only ſix. Euſebius, in his *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory*, recounts the ſufferings which the Chriſtians had at various periods undergone; but he does not take upon him to fix the times of perſecution at any determinate number. It may, however, in ſome meaſure be collected from what he ſays, that the church had experienced nine ſuch ſeaſons of adverſity. Sulpitius Severus, in the fifth century, records the like number: but it appears that, at the time he wrote, the notion of ten perſecutions had begun to be entertained; for, after enumerating nine that were paſſed, he gives the Chriſtians to underſtand that the tenth, which would be the final one, was not to be expected until the end of the world. *Exinde*, ſays he, *tranquillis rebus pace perfruimur: neque ulterius perſequutionem fore credimus, niſi eam, quam ſub fine jam ſæculi Antichriſtus exercebit. Etenim ſacris vocibus decem plagis mundum afficiendum pronuntiatum eſt; ita quum jam novem fuerint, quæ ſupereſt ultima erit. Hiſtor. Sacr.* lib. ii. cap. xxxiii. p. 248, 249. ed. Clerici. Now it appears to me ſcarcely poſſible to conceive any thing that could more ſtrongly ſupport the poſition advanced by me in the commencement of this note than this paſſage does. The Chriſtians of the fifth century, we ſee by it, had, from their interpretation of ſome paſſages of Scripture, (what thoſe paſſages were Sulpitius does not mention,) been led to entertain a belief that the Chriſtian commonwealth was deſtined to endure ten principal calamities; but the perſecutions recorded in hiſtory, they found, did not amount to that number. In order, therefore, to uphold the authority of the ſacred volume, they determined that the completion of the predicted number of perſecutions was to be looked for in the coming of Antichriſt, at the end of the world. But even in that ſame age, there appear to have been others of the Chriſtians who, although they were equally confident in the perſuaſion that ten perſecutions were predicted in Scripture, yet did not think that the afflictions to be expected from Antichriſt were to be included in that number; and therefore endeavoured, by twiſting and perverting the hiſtory of the Chriſtian church previous to the time of Conſtantine the Great,

judgment in regard to matters of a divine nature, and never moleſted the Jews on account of their religion,

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Great, to make it exhibit all ten of the calamitous periods which they conceived to be thus foretold in the ſacred writings. For this we have the teſtimony of Auguſtine, in his work *de Civitate Dei*, lib. xviii. cap. lii. p. 404, 405, tom. vii. opp. edit. Benedict. where, adverting to this ſubject, he declares that he can by no means aſſent to the opinion that only ten perſecutions of the Chriſtians are foretold in Scripture: *Proinde ne illud quidem temere puto eſſe dicendum, ſive credendum, quod nonnullis viſum eſt, vel videtur*, (this opinion, therefore, we ſee, was entertained merely by a few,) *non amplius eccleſiam paſſuram perſecutiones uſque ad tempus Antichriſti, quam quot jam paſſa eſt, id eſt, decem, ut undecima, eademque noviſſima, ſit ab Antichriſto.* In theſe words Auguſtine points to the way in which the perſecutions were computed, by thoſe who maintained that the church had undergone ten previouſly to the time of Conſtantine, and which is ſimilar to the modern mode of computation. With regard to its being correct or erroneous he delivers no opinion, but leaves the queſtion entirely at reſt. We are next put by him in poſſeſſion of the particular part of Scripture on which this notion of the ten perſecutions, antecedent to the time of Conſtantine, was grounded. *Plagas enim Ægyptiorum quoniam decem fuerunt, antequam inde exire inciperet populus Dei, putant ad hunc intellectum eſſe referendas, ut noviſſima Antichriſti perſecutio ſimilis videatur undecimæ plagæ, qua Ægyptii, dum hoſtiliter ſequerentur Hebræos, in mari rubro, populo Dei per ſiccum tranſiente, perierunt.* We ſee here, then, the ſource from whence ſprung the notion of the ten perſecutions antecedent to the reign of Conſtantine; and alſo the reaſon why the opinion of Sulpitius was rejected, and the laſt perſecution under Antichriſt excluded from that number. Some ſilly trifling Scriptural commentators of the day had taken it into their heads, that the ten plagues of Egypt were to be regarded as typical of the perſecutions that the Chriſtians were to undergo at the hands of the pagans; and that Pharaoh bore the repreſentation of Antichriſt: and hence they were led to conſider it as indiſputable that ten perſecutions of the Chriſtians muſt have taken place prior to the reign of Conſtantine; and that the afflictions to be expected from Antichriſt ought not to be reckoned as one of thoſe ten calamitous ſeaſons which it was predicted in Scripture ſhould

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religion, it has afforded grounds for ſurpriſe to many that they ſhould have diſcovered a temper ſo

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ſhould befal the church. It is, however, a circumſtance which muſt, we ſhould preſume, in no ſmall degree excite the reader's aſtoniſhment, that theſe ſagacious commentators on Holy Writ ſhould not have perceived that this expoſition neceſſarily implies what it is utterly beyond the reach of belief to credit, namely, that the Egyptians, and all thoſe on whom the Almighty ſent down the ten dreadful ſcourges mentioned in Scripture, and particularly Pharaoh, with his ſervants and ſoldiers, who were ſwallowed up in the Red Sea, were the typical repreſentatives of the innocent and holy Chriſtians, who were perſecuted by the Roman emperors. For if the ten plagues, with which God afflicted the Egyptians, are to be conſidered as typical of the firſt ten perſecutions of the church of Chriſt, it neceſſarily follows that the perſons who endured theſe plagues muſt have been the repreſentatives of the early Chriſtians: and if the miſerable overthrow and deſtruction of Pharaoh and his hoſt is to be underſtood as prefigurative of the direful viſitation which good men are taught to expect from Antichriſt and his followers, we are equally conſtrained to regard the Egyptian king and his army as repreſentatives of the faithful adherents of our Lord, who are to endure the perſecuting violence of this arch adverſary to the cauſe of Chriſt. Indeed, Auguſtine himſelf, although he entertained no doubt but that the words of Scripture had a recondite meaning attached to them, yet conſidered this interpretation as futile, and built on no ſolid foundation. *Sed ego*, ſays he, *illa re geſta in Egypto, iſtas perſecutiones prophetice ſignificatas eſſe non arbitror: quamvis ab eis, qui hoc putant, exquiſite et ingenioſe illa ſingula his ſingulis comparata videantur, non prophetico ſpiritu ſed conjectura mentis humanæ, quæ aliquando ad verum pervenit, aliquando fallitur.* But it ſhould ſeem that Auguſtine was not acquainted with all the arguments by which the advocates for the opinion, that the Chriſtians had undergone ten perſecutions, endeavoured to eſtabliſh this point, ſo repugnant to all hiſtory. A principal argument of theirs (and one which, to confeſs the truth, has ſomething ſpecious in it) was drawn from the Apocalypſe. St. John ſees a harlot ſitting on a terrible beaſt, which had ſeven heads and ten horns. Rev. xvii. 1—10. There is no queſtion but that this woman repreſents Rome; and St. John expreſsly tells us, that the ten horns of the beaſt ſignify ten kings.

so inhuman and implacable in their carriage towards the Christians, a set of men of the most harmless

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kings. Rev. xvii. 12. The same inspired writer adds, that these ten horns of the beast, or ten kings, should make war with the Lamb, that is, Christ; but that he should overcome them. v. 14. This is the prophecy which induced the ancient Christians to maintain that ten of the Roman emperors, prior to Constantine, were at open enmity with the church; and to attempt to force on us, in direct opposition to all historic evidence, the notion that the number of persecutions had been exactly ten. Their way of reasoning was this:—Since by the woman whom John saw is to be understood Rome, and by the ten horns ten kings, there can be no doubt but that these ten kings must be ten Roman emperors; and since the wars of these ten kings with the Lamb, that is, Christ, unquestionably signify their endeavours, by means of laws and punishments, to extirpate the Christians, and entirely abolish their religion, it is evident that ten Roman emperors would oppress and persecute Christ in the persons of his disciples. But, said they, the successors of Constantine, who at present govern the Roman empire, are Christians; and it is not at all likely that their descendants should renounce the faith: those ten enemies of the Lamb or Christ must, therefore, have lived and made war on him before the reign of Constantine. Not permitting themselves to doubt of the accuracy of this mode of reasoning, it became at once their object so to manage the history of the church, previous to the reign of that emperor, as to make it exhibit the ten regal enemies of our Lord making war upon him, by ten persecutions of his faithful adherents. No one would ever have taken up the notion of the ten persecutions, had it not been for the ten plagues of Egypt recorded by Moses, and the ten horns of the beast mentioned by St. John. There are none who have assumed greater freedom in perverting ancient history than those who, without the requisite talents and information, have taken upon them to expound the sacred Oracles. In confirmation of what I have thus advanced, I will quote merely one passage from Gerhohus *de corrupto Ecclesiæ Statu*, a work published by Steph. Baluzius, in the fifth volume of his *Miscellanea*, p. 77. It is not indeed older than the twelfth century, but it nevertheless puts us in possession of what was the opinion of prior ages. *Deinde reliqui leones a Nerone usque ad Diocletianum per decem universales persequutiones*

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harmleſs inoffenſive character, who never harboured in their minds a wiſh or thought inimical to the welfare of the ſtate [y]. But it is not very difficult to account for this. The Romans, it is true, extended their toleration to every kind of religion, from whence no danger to the public ſafety was to be apprehended; but, at the ſame

tiones ita comederunt ac diſperſerunt gregem Domini, ut illa beſtia decem cornibus terribilis Danieli præoſtenſa jam ſingulis cornibus in ſingulis perſecutionibus debachata, et ſanguine ſanctorum ſatiata ſit, ultra quam dici poſſit. There were ſome, however, as we learn from the following words of Gerhohus, who were of opinion that by the ten horns of the beaſt, we ought rather to underſtand the ten years of the Diocletian perſecution: *Et quia ultima perſequutione, Diocletiano et Maximiano tyrannizantibus, decem annis vexata eſt eccleſia, ſive in decem univerſalibus perſecutionibus, ſive in decem annis ultimæ perſecutionis intelligas decem cornua crudelis beſtiæ, Romani videlicet imperii, gratanter accipe humiliationem ex tunc illius beſtiæ, ita ut foenum quaſi bos comedens et præſepe Domini ſui agnoſcens rore cæli tincta ſit, baptizato videlicet Conſtantino imperatore.*

[y] As every thing which can tend to excite ſuſpicion or doubt in the minds of the ignorant, reſpecting the divine origin of the Chriſtian religion, is eagerly caught at by thoſe of the preſent day who undertake to diſprove it, it is not to be wondered at that they ſhould endeavour to avail themſelves of the antipathy of the Romans to Chriſtianity, in order to throw a ſhade over its excellence, and diſcredit its authority. The wiſeſt people, ſay they, that ever exiſted upon the face of the earth,—a people in the higheſt degree diſtinguiſhed for their humanity, and who were never known in any other inſtance to moleſt any mortal whatever on account of his religion, yet pronounced Chriſtianity to be incompatible with the public welfare, and refuſed it toleration. It will therefore not admit of a doubt, but that there muſt have been ſomething vicious and highly cenſurable in the conduct and character of the early Chriſtians, which, if not repreſſed, threatened eminently to endanger the proſperity and ſafety of the commonwealth. But as nothing can be more ill founded than theſe ſurmiſes, they ſerve only to expoſe the ignorance of thoſe by whom they are ſuggeſted, and to betray their utter want of acquaintance with the ancient Roman hiſtory.

time,

time, they would not endure that any one ſhould deride or attempt to explode the religion of the ſtate, or that which had the ſupport of the laws: for there exiſted between the government and religion of the Romans ſuch an intimate connection and dependence on each other, that whoever attacked or endeavoured to undermine the latter, could not of neceſſity appear to them otherwiſe than as hoſtile to the former, and inimical to the dignity of the ſtate. On this account, all ſuch of the Jews as lived intermixed amongſt the Romans, were particularly cautious in whatever they ſaid or did, to avoid every thing which could be conſtrued into a reflection on the religion or gods of the commonwealth. But the conduct of the Chriſtians was directly the reverſe of this: for, laying aſide every ſort of fear, they ſtrenuouſly endeavoured to make the Romans renounce their vain and ſilly ſuperſtitions, and were continually urging the citizens to give up and aboliſh thoſe ſacred rites, on the obſervance of which, as we above remarked, the welfare and dignity of the commonwealth were thought ſo much to depend. Under theſe circumſtances, it could not well otherwiſe happen but that the Chriſtians, although they intended no ill whatever to the ſtate, yet ſhould come to be looked upon and treated as enemies of the Roman government. CENT. I.

XXVIII. It yielded a ſtill further ground for offence, that the Chriſtians did not content themſelves with entering the liſts againſt the religion of the Romans only, but alſo boldly aſſerted the falſehood and inſufficiency of every other religious ſyſtem in the world; and contended that eternal ſalvation was to be obtained in no other way than by laying hold on Chriſt. For the inference which the Romans drew from this was, Cauſes of theſe perſecutions.

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that the members of this ſect were not only immeaſurably arrogant and ſupercilious in their pretenſions, but were alſo filled with hatred towards all thoſe who differed from them in opinion, and were conſequently to be regarded as perſons likely to ſow amongſt the people the moſt inveterate diſcord, and to occaſion diſturbances of a very ſerious nature to the ſtate. For it was of old recognized as a maxim of civil polity, that a ſect which not only believes thoſe of every other perſuaſion to be in the wrong, but alſo conſiders every other ſpecies of religious culture, except that which its own tenets preſcribe, as impious and offenſive in the ſight of Heaven, is ever prone to excite public commotions, and give annoyance to thoſe who do not belong to it. And I have no doubt but that we ought to underſtand Tacitus as intending to reproach the Chriſtians with cheriſhing a diſpoſition of this ſort, when he repreſents them as *odii generis humani convictos;* and in like manner, Suetonius, when he attributes to them *maleficam ſuperſtitionem* [z].

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[z] Tacitus, *Annal.* lib. xv. cap. xxxv. Suetonius *in Nerone*, cap. xvi. Some very eminent men have imagined that theſe hiſtorians did not properly diſtinguiſh between Jews and Chriſtians, but haſtily aſcribed to the latter the ſame *hoſtile odium adverſus omnes alios*, which was not without reaſon attributed to the former. But it ſhould ſeem to have eſcaped thoſe who entertain this opinion, that Tacitus and Suetonius are, in the paſſages above referred to, evidently ſpeaking of a crime peculiar to the Chriſtians,—a crime of ſo heinous a nature as to deſerve capital puniſhment. Whatever there might be in the Jews of the *humani generis odium*, it is certain that it did not appear to the Romans in this highly criminal light, or of ſuch a dangerous nature as to be termed *exitiabilis ſuperſtitio*, which is the expreſſion made uſe of by Tacitus in regard to the Chriſtians, ſince they were freely permitted to take up their abode, and openly to exerciſe their religion in any part of the

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XXIX. Whilſt theſe conſiderations had the effect of ſtirring up the emperors, the ſenate, the preſidents, and the magiſtrates, to endeavour, as far as in them lay, to arreſt the progreſs of Chriſtianity, by means of the moſt rigorous laws and puniſhments; there were others which operated no leſs powerfully on the people, and particularly on the pagan prieſthood, ſo as to cauſe them to require of their governors and magiſtrates, with an importunity approaching even to violence, that the Chriſtians, wherever they could be found, ſhould be put to death: and it not unfrequently happened that, by their clamours and threats, they extorted a compliance with their demands even from thoſe who would never otherwiſe have been prevailed on to imbrue their hands in the blood of the juſt. The Jews were poſſeſſed of a ſplendid temple; the ceremonies attending their religious rites were grand and magnificent; they offered up ſacrifices, and had a ſupreme pontiff, with a numerous prieſthood; and their mode of worſhip was, in ſeveral other reſpects, of a ſhowy and an attractive nature: hence the Jewiſh religion appeared to the heathens as differing in no very material degree from thoſe of other nations; and the God of the Hebrews was looked upon by them as the provincial deity, who had the immediate and eſpecial care and governance of that particular people. But the Chriſtian mode of worſhip was accompanied with none of thoſe appendages which conſtituted the apparent affinity between the Jewiſh

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the empire. It may alſo be noticed, that Suetonius expreſsly terms the religion of the Chriſtians *nova ſuperſtitio*, a modern ſuperſtition; by which he clearly diſtinguiſhes them from the Jews, whoſe religion was well known to be of no recent origin.

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religion and thoſe of other nations: ignorant men, therefore, like the pagan multitude, who imagined that the worſhip acceptable to the gods conſiſted in the obſervance of ceremonies and feſtivals, and the offering up of victims, at once concluded that the Chriſtians paid no ſort of homage to Heaven, and conſequently believed neither in a Supreme Being, nor a Providence. When the minds of the people at large had received an impreſſion of this ſort, it could ſcarcely happen but that the moſt virulent rage for perſecution ſhould enſue: for it was inculcated no leſs ſtrongly by the Roman laws than by thoſe of other ſtates, that men who diſbelieved the exiſtence of the gods ought to be regarded as peſts of the human race, the toleration of whom might endanger the ſtate, and be productive of the higheſt detriment to the beſt intereſts of ſociety.

Cauſes of theſe perſecutions.

XXX. But this was not all. Attached to the ſervice of that hoſt of deities which the Romans worſhipped, both in public and private, there was an immenſe number of prieſts, augurs, ſoothſayers, and miniſters of inferior order, who not only derived from it the means of living at their eaſe, with every luxury at command, but were alſo, from the ſacred nature of the functions with which they were inveſted, ſure to ſtand high in the eſtimation of the people, and to poſſeſs no inconſiderable degree of influence over them. When all theſe perceived that it was highly probable, or rather felt it to be morally certain, that if once the Chriſtian religion ſhould become predominant with the public, there would immediately be an end to all the emoluments, honours, and advantages, which they then enjoyed; a regard for their own intereſts naturally prompted them to endeavour, by every means in their power, to leſſen

leſſen the credit of the Chriſtians, and to render them obnoxious to the people and the magiſtrates. Aſſociated with theſe in their efforts to put down Chriſtianity, there was an innumerable multitude of perſons of various other deſcriptions, to whom the public ſuperſtitions were a ſource of no ſmall profit; ſuch as merchants who ſupplied the worſhippers with frankincenſe and victims, and other requiſites for ſacrifice, architects, vintners, gold and ſilver-ſmiths, carpenters, ſtatuaries, ſculptors, players on the flute, harpers, and others; to all of whom the heathen polytheiſm, with its numerous temples, and long train of prieſts, and miniſters, and ceremonies, and feſtivals, was a principal ſource of affluence and proſperity [*a*]. CENT. I.

XXXI. From the enmity of the Jews, and of perſons like theſe, proceeded thoſe horrible calumnies, with which it is well known that the character of the firſt Chriſtians was very generally aſperſed, and which occaſioned them to be conſidered by the magiſtrates and the people at large as entirely undeſerving either of benevolence or pity. Nor is it at all to be wondered at that the ſlanders to which we allude ſhould, until they were refuted, have been productive of this effect; for the crimes thus falſely imputed to the Chriſtians were of the foulеſt and moſt diſguſting complexion. Amongſt other heinous offences whereof they were accuſed, it was aſſerted that even their ſolemn religious aſſemblies Calumnies propagated reſpecting the Chriſtians.

[*a*] Acts, xix. 24. An idea of the vaſt detriment which the intereſts of theſe prieſts and merchants experienced from the rapid ſpread of Chriſtianity, may be collected from this one paſſage in Pliny's epiſtles, lib. x. epiſt. 97. p. 458. *Satis conſtat prope jam deſolata templa cœpiſſe celebrari —— paſſimque venire victimas, quarum adhuc rariſſimus emptor inveniebatur.*

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Calumnies propagated reſpecting the Chriſtians.

were polluted by the commiſſion of the moſt deteſtable of crimes; that in the place of the Deity they worſhipped an aſs; that they paid divine honours to their prieſts, in a way which it would be an unpardonable violation of decency even to name; that they were active in promoting ſedition, and deſirous of bringing about revolutions in the ſtate [*b*]. And with ſo much art and addreſs were theſe malignant falſehoods framed and ſupported, that they obtained credit even with thoſe who filled the higheſt ſtations in the government. But what contributed as much as any thing to inflame the paſſions of the lower orders, and ſtir them up to acts of revenge, was the malicious artifice of their prieſts, in attributing every thing which could be regarded in the light of a national or general affliction, to the toleration of the Chriſtian religion: for whether it were war, or tempeſt, or peſtilence, or any other ſpecies of calamity which befel the public, they equally availed themſelves of it, and aſſiduouſly inculcated on the minds of the people that ſuch was the method in which the gods avenged themſelves of the inſults offered them by the Chriſtians. Inſtructed thus from what they deemed infallible authority, that ſuch was the origin and cauſe of their ſufferings, the credulous multitude thought of nothing but revenge, and demanded of their magiſtrates, with the moſt imperious clamour,

[*b*] The reader who wiſhes to purſue this topic further may conſult a work, written by Chriſt. Kortholt, expreſsly on the ſubject of theſe calumnies, and entituled, *Paganus Obtrectator, ſeu de Calumniis Gentilium in Chriſtianos*, Kilon. 1698, in 4to.; as alſo the treatiſe of Jo. Jac. Huldric, *de Calumniis Gentilium in Chriſtianos*, Tigur. 1744, in 8vo.: the materials for both of which were drawn from the Apologies of the early Chriſtians, and other ancient authorities.

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the extirpation of a ſect ſo utterly hateful and pernicious [*c*]. CENT. I.

XXXII. Thoſe belonging to the Chriſtian commonwealth who, during this critical ſituation of its affairs, fell victims to their piety, and whoſe conſtancy in the cauſe of their divine Maſter even death itſelf under a variety of terrific forms had not been able to ſhake [*d*], were thenceforward denominated *martyrs:* an appellation borrowed from the ſacred writings [*e*], and emphatically applied to theſe illuſtrious *witneſſes* of the divinity of the Chriſtian religion, in conſequence of their having ſealed their teſtimony with their blood. Thoſe who had never been called upon to give this laſt ſevere proof of their faith and ſincerity, but had nevertheleſs, at the peril of their lives, and with the hazard of honour, fortune, and every other worldly conſideration, made open profeſſion of their belief in Chriſt in the face of the heathen tribunals, were diſtinguiſhed by the title of *confeſſors.* The authority and reſpect which holy men of either Martyrs and confeſſors.

[*c*] See Arnobius *adverſus Gentes*, and alſo the various other writers of the firſt ages, who came forward on behalf of the Chriſtians, and defended them againſt all theſe malignant aſperſions of their adverſaries.

[*d*] Reſpecting the various kinds of puniſhment and ſuffering which the martyrs were made to undergo, the reader may conſult a moſt elegantly printed little work of Ant. Gallonius, the laſt edition of which is that of Antwerp, 1668, 12mo. A work on the ſame ſubject was alſo publiſhed by Caſp. Sagittarius at Jena, in 1673, in 4to. But in both of theſe works there is much that cannot be relied upon; for as to thoſe accounts which have come down to us under the title of *Acta Martyrum*, or "the Acts of the Martyrs," their authority is certainly for the moſt part of a very queſtionable nature: indeed, ſpeaking generally, it might be coming nearer to the truth perhaps, were we to ſay that they are entitled to no ſort of credit whatever.

[*e*] Hebr. xi. 39. xii. 1.

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of theſe deſcriptions enjoyed amongſt their brethren during life, and the veneration in which their memory was afterwards held by the Chriſtians of their own age, were ſuch as almoſt ſurpaſs belief [*f*]. As time advanced, this reverence for the

[*f*] Both martyrs and confeſſors were looked upon as being full of the Holy Spirit, and as acting under an immediate divine inſpiration. Whatever they ſaid, therefore, was conſidered as proceeding from the oracles of God; whatever, during their impriſonment, they required or wiſhed to have done, was regarded in the light of a divine command—to diſobey which would be the very height of impiety; and whatever they did was accounted as nothing leſs than the act of God himſelf, with whoſe Spirit they were conceived to be filled. Whatever might have been the ſins and offences of the martyrs, it was imagined that they were all atoned for and waſhed away by their own blood, not by that of Chriſt. (Vid. Clemens Alexandr. *Stromat.* lib. iv. p. 596.) Being thus reſtored to a ſtate of abſolute purity and innocence, it was conceived that they were taken directly up into heaven, and admitted to a ſhare in the divine councils and adminiſtration; that they ſat as judges with God, enjoying the higheſt marks of his favour, and poſſeſſing influence ſufficient to obtain from him whatever they might make the object of their prayers. Annual feſtivals were appointed in commemoration of their deaths, their characters were made the theme of public eulogies, monuments were charged with tranſmitting of their names and acts to poſterity, and various other diſtinguiſhed honours were paid to their memories. Thoſe who had acquired the title of confeſſors were maintained at the public expence, and were on every occaſion treated with the utmoſt reverence. The intereſts and concerns of the different religious aſſemblies to which they belonged were, for the moſt part, conſigned to their care and management;—inſomuch, indeed, that they might almoſt be termed the very ſouls of their reſpective churches. Whenever the office of biſhop or preſbyter became vacant, they were called to it as a matter of right, in preference to every one elſe, although there might be others ſuperior to them in point of talents and abilities. Out of the exceedingly high opinion that was entertained of the ſanctity and exalted character of the martyrs, at length ſprung up the notion that their reliques poſſeſſed

the characters of both martyrs and confeſſors increaſed; and being ſeconded by various opinions reſpecting theſe victims of perſecution, of an inſpiriting nature indeed, but which appear to have been by far too haſtily adopted, it had the effect of ſtimulating others to make equal ſacrifices in the cauſe of Chriſt, and for his ſake to encounter the hazard of a cruel and an ignominious death with the utmoſt readineſs and fortitude, and to meet this moſt ſevere of human puniſhments in all its terrors, without the leaſt reluctance or diſmay. By degrees, however, it degenerated into a pernicious kind of ſuperſtition, and, becoming a ſource of corruptions in the true religion, was eventually productive of no ſmall detriment to the intereſts of Chriſtianity. CENT. I.

XXXIII. That the number of thoſe who ſuffered death in the cauſe of Chriſt, during the different perſecutions to which the church was expoſed for upwards of three centuries, ſo far from being ſmall, was, on the contrary, very conſiderable, is a fact that ſtands ſupported by the weightieſt and moſt poſitive evidence. There can, however, at the ſame time, be no doubt but that many of thoſe whoſe names are to be found in the immenſe army of martyrs, which both the Greek and Roman churches laud and Multitude of martyrs.

poſſeſſed a divine virtue, efficacious in counteracting or remedying any ills to which either our ſouls or bodies may be expoſed. From the ſame ſource aroſe the practice of imploring their aſſiſtance and interceſſion in caſes of doubt or adverſity, as alſo that of erecting ſtatues to their memory, and paying to theſe images divine worſhip: in fine, to ſuch an height of vicious exceſs was this veneration for the martyrs carried, that the Chriſtians came at laſt to manifeſt their reverence for theſe champions of the faith by honours nearly ſimilar to thoſe which the heathens of old were accuſtomed to pay to their demi-gods and heroes.

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worſhip, might with very great propriety be ſtruck out of the liſt. To be at once convinced of this, we need only be appriſed that the governors and magiſtrates did not direct their ſeverity promiſcuouſly againſt the great body of the Chriſtians at large, but ſelected as objects of capital puniſhment merely ſuch of them as filled the office of biſhop or preſbyter, or held ſome other ſtation of rank and conſequence in the church, or who had diſplayed a more than ordinary zeal for the propagation of the Chriſtian faith, or were diſtinguiſhed for their wealth and dignity [g]. As for thoſe of a lower order in the church, or of an inferior condition in life, although they might be occaſionally impriſoned and called to an account, they were, for the moſt part, conſidered by the civil power as beneath notice, and might, without any danger to themſelves, be preſent at the laſt ſad ſcene of their brethren's ſufferings. Whenever, therefore, a Chriſtian of either of the deſcriptions above noticed was thrown into priſon, the deacons and Chriſtians of common rank found nothing to prevent them from viſiting him, and otherwiſe miniſtering, as far as in them lay, to his aſſiſtance and comfort, or finally from accompanying him, after his condemnation, to the place of puniſhment [b].

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[g] Polycarp. *Martyrium*, § xii. *Acta Fruƈuoſi in* Ruinarti *Acƈa Martyrum ſinceris*, p. 219. Cypriani *Epiſt.* v. xiv., p. 10. 23. edit. Benedict. et plur. al.

[b] Lucian. *in Peregrin.* tom. ii. opp. p. 566. edit. Græevii. Cypriani *Epiſt.* ii. iv. p. 8, 9. If this ſtatement of the fact be allowed to have its due weight, it muſt, I think, operate conſiderably towards placing the celebrated controverſy reſpecting the number of martyrs in a proper light, and thus be highly inſtrumental in bringing it to a concluſion.

XXXIV. Foremoſt in the rank of thoſe emperors, on whom the church looks back with horror as her perſecutors, ſtands Nero, a prince whoſe conduct towards the Chriſtians admits of no palliation, but was to the laſt degree unprincipled and inhuman. The dreadful perſecution which took place by order of this tyrant, commenced at Rome about the middle of November, in the year of our Lord 64 [*i*]. As a pretext

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concluſion. That but few, comparatively ſpeaking, ſuffered death for the cauſe of Chriſt was, as is well known, a favourite poſition with the famous Hen. Dodwell, a man eminent for his learning and extenſive reading, but, as it ſhould ſeem, headſtrong, and apt to run into extremes. The arguments by which he endeavoured to eſtabliſh it are to be found in the eleventh of his *Diſſertationes Cyprianicæ*. This opinion has alſo been embraced by many other celebrated literary characters, though not on the ſame grounds. On the other hand, there are ſeveral authors who have entered the liſts on the oppoſite ſide, ſtrenuouſly and at much length maintaining that the number of the martyrs was very great. Of theſe, Theod. Ruinart may be conſidered as taking the lead, in his Preface to the *Acta Martyrum ſincera et ſelecta*. By abating ſomewhat on either ſide of the queſtion, we might probably arrive pretty near the truth. Were Dodwell's poſition to be ſo far modified, as to aſſert merely that the number of martyrs was conſiderably leſs than is commonly ſuppoſed, it muſt command the ready aſſent of every one who, in making up his mind on the ſubject, has not ſuffered his judgment to be miſled by popular traditions and idle ſtories, ſuch as for the moſt part conſtitute what are termed the Acts of the Martyrs, but formed his opinion from the evidence contained in monuments of indiſputable credit. On the other hand, it ſhould ſeem that the adverſaries of Dodwell might be very well able to ſubſtantiate their argument, could they be prevailed on to reduce it ſimply to this, that the number of the martyrs was certainly much greater than Dodwell could ever be brought to allow.

[*i*] This has been clearly proved by Al. de Vignoles, in two diſſertations *de Cauſa et Initio Perſequutionis Neronianæ*, which are to be found in Maſſon's *Hiſtoire critique de la*

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pretext for his cruelty, Nero did not, according to Tacitus [*k*], bring forward any accuſation againſt the Chriſtians on account of their religion, but imputed to them the commiſſion of a moſt heinous crime againſt the public. For having himſelf, by way of ſport, cauſed ſome houſes to be ſet on fire, and thus kindled a conflagration, by which great part of the city of Rome was deſtroyed, he, in order to divert the tide of popular indignation from its proper channel, denounced the Chriſtians as the authors of this public calamity, and diſplayed the utmoſt eagerneſs in directing againſt them all the vengeance of the ſtate; putting them to death without mercy, and even making a jeſt of their torments. Amongſt other horrible cruelties exerciſed on them by his command, they were wrapped in pitched garments, and, being faſtened to ſtakes, were lighted up as torches to diſpel the darkneſs of the night; their puniſhment being thus made to bear ſomewhat of an analogy to the crime whereof they were accuſed. According to ſome ancient authorities, both St. Peter and St. Paul ſuffered martyrdom under this firſt perſecution; the former being crucified invertedly, the latter beheaded: but this has been much queſtioned by ſubſequent writers, who find a difficulty in reconciling it with chronology [*l*]. Of any of the other victims of Nero's cruelty no memorial is left us whatever; none even of their names having

Republique des Lettres, tom. viii. p. 74. 117. and tom. ix. p. 172. 186. See alſo Nicol. Toinard. *ad Lactant. de Mortibus Perſequutorum*, p. 398. ed. Du Freſnoy.

[*k*] *Annal.* lib. xv. cap. xxxviii.

[*l*] Tillemont. *Hiſtoire des Empereurs*, tom. i. p. 564. Phil. Baratier, *de Succeſſione Romanor. Pontificum*, cap. v. p. 60.

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eſcaped the obliterating hand of time: for as to what is told us by the people of Milan, as well as thoſe of Lucca, Piſa, Aquileia, Ravenna, and other cities of Italy and Spain, about their patron ſaints having been put to death under the Neronian perſecution, it can obtain but little credit with any one of the leaſt intelligence, ſince it ſtands altogether unſupported by any evidence of weight or authority. Clement of Alexandria ſays, that St. Peter's wife was ſlain before her huſband [*m*]; but even this is by no means certain. This dreadful perſecution ceaſed but with the death of Nero. The empire, it is well known, was not delivered from the tyranny of this monſter until the year 68, when he put an end to his own life: it appears, therefore, that the Chriſtians muſt, in this firſt inſtance, have been expoſed to every ſpecies of inſult and outrage, under ſanction of the imperial authority, for a period of no leſs than four years.

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XXXV. Ancient authors leave us in much doubt as to the extent of this perſecution; ſo that we cannot well ſay whether Nero made it his object to extirpate the Chriſtians from every part of the empire, or whether his ſeverity was limited ſo as for it to fall merely by way of puniſhment on thoſe who, from their reſidence at Rome, might be conſidered as immediately implicated in the crime of ſetting fire to the city. Hence it has ariſen that although the learned in general favour the former opinion, yet we meet with ſeveral very eminent men who propend towards the latter. Thoſe who will be at the pains to compare the arguments that are urged on both ſides muſt at once perceive that there is no poſ-

[*m*] *Stromat.* lib. vii. p. 869. ed. Potter.

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ſibility of ſetting the queſtion ſo completely at reſt, as to leave no room for heſitation or doubt on the ſubject; ſince if the famous Spaniſh inſcription, which there is every reaſon to conſider as a forgery, be rejected, there is nothing like poſitive teſtimony to be brought forward by either party. The weight of probability, however, as well as of argument, is certainly in favour of the more common opinion of the two [*n*].

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[*n*] According to Lactantius, (*Inſtitut. Divinar.* lib. v. cap. xi. p. 578. ed. Walch.) a collection of all the edicts, publiſhed by the different emperors againſt the Chriſtians, was formerly got together by one Domitius, a celebrated Roman lawyer, and given to the public in a work of his, *de Officio Proconſulis*. If this book were now extant, it would throw conſiderable light on the general hiſtory of the afflictions and calamities to which the early Chriſtians were expoſed, and enable us at once to determine this queſtion reſpecting the extent of the Neronian perſecution. But ſince this work has been for a long time loſt beyond the hope of recovery, we have no where now to ſeek for illuſtration as to many points, except in conjecture. The firſt writer that I know of, who took upon him to controvert the commonly received opinion reſpecting the perſecution of the Chriſtians by Nero, was that moſt eminently learned and ingenious civilian Franc. Balduin, who, in his *Comment. ad Edicta Imperatorum in Chriſtianos*, p. 27, 28. edit. Gundling. maintains that no laws were enacted againſt the Chriſtians before the time of Trajan; which, if it could be by any means aſcertained for a fact, muſt at once place it beyond all doubt that Nero's ſeverity was directed merely againſt the Chriſtians of Rome. Next to him may be reckoned Jo. Launois, who, in the diſſertation which he publiſhed in defence of a paſſage in Sulpitius Severus, reſpecting the firſt martyrs of Gaul, § i. p. 139, 140. tom. ii. p. i. opp. by way of ſupporting the opinion there given concerning the firſt introduction and progreſs of Chriſtianity in that country, denies that the Neronian perſecution extended itſelf to the provinces. Nearer to our own times, this opinion has been ſtill more ably and at large defended by Hen. Dodwell, in the eleventh of his *Diſſertationes Cyprianicæ*, § xiii. p. 59.; and many others, who have ſince exerted

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XXXVI. The perſecution of the Chriſtians, which had ceaſed on the death of Nero, was, towards

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exerted themſelves in purging eccleſiaſtical hiſtory of its fables and abſurdities, have followed pretty nearly in the ſame path. Of all the arguments which the writers on this ſide of the queſtion bring forward, the principal and moſt cogent one is that which they deduce from the cauſe which, it is acknowledged on all hands, gave riſe to this perſecution. Nero, ſay they, did not deliver over the Chriſtians to puniſhment on account of their religion, but in conſequence of the crime which he falſely imputed to them of ſetting fire to the city. But it could never be objected to thoſe of the Chriſtians who lived in diſtant provinces, and had no connection with Rome, that they had any ſhare in an offence like this; and therefore it is moſt reaſonable to conclude that the vengeance of the public was in no ſhape directed againſt them. As to any other reaſons that have been adduced in ſupport of this opinion, I feel no heſitation in ſaying that they are ſuch as have but little weight or certainty in them, and are very eaſily to be refuted. And even in regard to that argument which I have juſt noticed as being the principal one that is brought forward on this ſide of the queſtion, ſo far is it from appearing to me at all concluſive, that I rather think thoſe on the oppoſite ſide might with equal propriety give a turn to it in their own favour. For it is incredible, they might urge, that the tyrant ſhould permit the brethren and aſſociates of men, who were the reputed authors of ſo great a calamity at Rome, to continue unmoleſted, though living at a diſtance. The public might very naturally feel apprehenſive that the Chriſtians in the different provinces were actuated by ſimilar views, and meditated the ſame attempts as were imputed to thoſe at Rome; and it was, therefore, no more than what the common ſafety appeared to demand, that the emperor ſhould direct his ſeverity generally againſt the whole body of thoſe who profeſſed a religion ſo dangerous and pregnant with deſtruction. The arguments of thoſe who maintain that the Neronian perſecution extended throughout the whole of the empire, poſſeſs greater force than thoſe which are adduced on the oppoſite ſide; yet they are not ſo determinate, but that there are ſome exceptions which may very properly be taken to them. Lactantius, it is urged, ſays, that it was ſuperſtition, or a regard for the religion of his anceſtors, which prompted Nero *ad excidendum cæleſte tem-*

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wards the end of the firſt century, revived by the emperor Domitian, who, taking, as it ſhould ſeem,

plum proſilire. But to this the advocates for the oppoſite opinion may well object, that ſurely, as to this point, more reliance is to be placed on the teſtimony of Tacitus, who was a more ancient writer than Lactantius, and doubtleſs by far better acquainted with Roman affairs than he could poſſibly be. And indeed this ſuperiority in the teſtimony of Tacitus over that of Lactantius was long ſince contended for by Alphonſ. de Vignoles, in an admirable diſſertation, which is to be found in Maſſon's *Hiſtoire critique de la Republique des Lettres*, tom. ix. p. 172. An inſcription is next brought forward, which it is pretended was found ſomewhere in Portugal or Spain, and of which a copy (after Schott and Metellus) is given by Gruter, in his *Inſcription. Romanar. Corpus*, tom. i. p. ccxxxviii. n. 9. Its purport is to extol Nero, in the firſt place, on account of his freeing the province from robbers; and, in the next place, *ob eandem provinciam his qui novam generi humano ſuperſtitionem inculcabant purgatam.* Now if this inſcription had come to light through a channel that admitted of no ſuſpicion, it muſt at once be received as a proof that Nero's perſecution of the Chriſtians extended itſelf to the provinces: for it is clear from a paſſage in Suetonius, (in Nerone, cap. xvi.) that *nova ſuperſtitio*, "the new or modern ſuperſtition," was the title by which the Romans were accuſtomed to refer to the Chriſtian religion. But Scaliger and other great men after him have entertained conſiderable doubts as to the authenticity and authority of this monument, and, in my opinion, not without ample reaſon: for I may, without danger of contradiction from any, even of the moſt learned and intelligent of the Spaniſh writers themſelves, ſtate it for a fact that no Spaniard or Portugueſe ever had the leaſt glimpſe of it. But had any thing like a genuine inſcription of this nature ever been diſcovered, there can be no doubt that it would have been preſerved with the utmoſt care, as a thing of the higheſt value and importance. I paſs over the various other arguments on this ſide, which any one who may be inclined to examine them will find in the Preface to Ruinart's *Acta Martyrum ſincera*, § iii. and will only, by way of concluſion, remark that in my opinion there is nothing which makes more ſtrongly in favour of the general notion reſpecting the Neronian perſecution, than the diſputation of Tertullian with thoſe who endeavoured to diſguiſe

ſeem, the cruelty of the former for his model, began about the year 94 or 95 to afflict the church

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diſguiſe their own malice towards the Chriſtians under the cloak of the imperial edicts. For at the time when Tertullian wrote his *Apology*, that is, towards the end of the ſecond century, and before the emperor Severus had enacted any new laws againſt the Chriſtians, the Roman magiſtrates were accuſtomed to reply to any who might come forward on behalf of the Chriſtians, that in this reſpect nothing was left to their diſcretion; for that however deſirous they might feel to ſpare theſe unfortunate people, it was impoſſible for them to do ſo, ſince the laws were peremptory to the contrary. *Poſtremo*, ſays Tertullian, (*in Apologet.* cap. jv. p. 46. edit. Havercamp.) *legum obſtruitur auctoritas adverſus veritatem, ut aut nihil dicatur retractandum eſſe poſt leges, aut ingratis neceſſitas obſequii præferatur veritati.* This pretence Tertullian attacks with great eloquence, and expoſes its weakneſs and fallacy by various arguments, of which the following is not one of the leaſt forcible.—Thoſe laws to which ye refer, as not permitting you to ſuffer the Chriſtians to exiſt, were enacted by princes whoſe cruelty, impiety, and mad fury, ye cannot but regard with deteſtation, namely, by thoſe monſters of the human race the emperors Nero and Domitian. Their ſucceſſors in the government of the empire have all been too deeply impreſſed with the ſentiments of juſtice and benevolence, to follow their example. Trajan revoked theſe laws in part, and others have ſuffered them to fall altogether into neglect. Doth it become you then, I would aſk, you to whom we are taught to look up as to men diſtinguiſhed for wiſdom and juridical ſagacity, to keep alive and enforce laws which had for their authors the moſt unprincipled of mortals? *Quales ergo leges iſtæ, quas adverſus nos ſoli exequuntur* (*exequi* is uſed by Tertullian in the ſame ſenſe as *ferre* or *ſancire*) *impii, injuſti, turpes, vani, dementes: quas Trajanus ex parte fruſtratus eſt, vetando inquiri Chriſtianos:* (the laws of Nero and Domitian muſt of courſe, therefore, have directed that the Chriſtians ſhould be proſecuted:) *quas nullus Hadrianus, quanquam curioſitatum omnium explorator, nullus Veſpaſianus, quanquam Judæorum debellator, nullus Pius, nullus Verus impreſſit.*—Now if this ſtatement of Tertullian be deſerving of credit, and there is certainly no reaſon whatever to ſuſpect its accuracy, there can be no doubt but that Nero as well as Domitian promulgated edicts

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edicts againſt the Chriſtians; and if ſuch edicts were promulgated, not a queſtion can remain of their having been carried into effect throughout all the provinces. There are ſome other things which might be pointed out, in addition to what I have thus noticed; but, to confeſs the truth, it appears to me that nothing of any moment would thereby be added to the evidence already adduced.

[o] Vid. Euſeb. *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iii. cap. xix, xx. p. 89. In the account there given, I ſee nothing whatever that can be deemed difficult of belief. From beginning to end, it has all the appearance of a ſimple unvarniſhed narrative. The fact, therefore, ſeems to have been, that ſome one, an enemy alike both to the Jews and the Chriſtians, had ſuggeſted to the emperor that the Jews looked daily for a king to ariſe from amongſt the poſterity of David, who ſhould give law to the whole earth; that the Chriſtians, in like manner, expected that Chriſt would ſoon return, and eſtabliſh for himſelf a grand and extenſive dominion; and that, conſequently, both Chriſtians and Jews were to be regarded with a jealous eye, as perſons harbouring views dangerous to the ſtate, and only awaiting their opportunity to break out into open revolt. Inſidious whiſpers of this kind would naturally prompt the tyrant to order, as we are told

during this ſeaſon of calamity to the church that St. John the apoſtle was baniſhed to the iſland of Patmos, after having, as Tertullian and others report, come forth ſafe and uninjured from the midſt of a cauldron of boiling oil, into which his enemies had cauſed him to be thrown [*p*]. The

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told he did, that all the poſterity of David ſhould be ſought after, and put to death; and that meaſures ſhould be taken to give an equally effectual blow to any deſigns which might be entertained againſt him by the Chriſtians. The ſubject of the particular year in which this perſecution commenced is learnedly diſcuſſed by Toinard, in his notes to Lactantius *de Mortibus Perſequutorum*, p. 351. edit. Bauldrian.

[*p*] On this ſubject the reader may conſult what I formerly wrote, in anſwer to the venerable Heuman, in the firſt volume of my *Diſſertationes ad Hiſt. Eccleſiaſtic. pertinentes*, p. 497—546. I muſt confeſs that the account given by Tertullian, and after him by Jerome and others, of St. John's being thrown into a veſſel of boiling oil, by command of Domitian, and of his miraculous deliverance therefrom, appears to me to admit of ſome doubt. What if, by way of ſolving the difficulty, we were to hazard a conjecture that the whole account might be nothing more than a figure made uſe of by ſome one or other, in order to convey a ſtrong idea of the imminent peril to which St. John had been expoſed,—and that Tertullian, inſtead of taking what was ſaid in a metaphorical ſenſe, underſtood it *literally?* To uſe figures or metaphors of this kind, when ſpeaking of any one's life or fortune as having been expoſed to conſiderable danger or hazard, is a practice to which all the people of the eaſt are peculiarly prone: and we ourſelves very commonly ſay of a man who has been ſaved from imminent peril of his life, that he was plucked from the fire or the flames. In this way ſome one, in alluſion to the very narrow and unexpected eſcape which St. John had experienced, in having the puniſhment of death to which he had been ſentenced commuted for that of baniſhment, might perhaps ſay that he had, beyond all hope, got ſafe out of the burning oil. By a perſon ſtrongly diſpoſed, as Tertullian certainly was, to catch at and magnify every thing which had the appearance of a miracle, an expreſſion of *this* ſort might very readily be miſconceived, and, inſtead of being taken in a figurative ſenſe, be underſtood literally.

principal

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principal perſons who are ſaid to have ſuffered at this period were Flavius Clemens a conſul, and Flavia Domitilla, who was either his niece or his wife. The former is ſtated to have been put to death, and the latter to have been commanded to withdraw into the iſland Pandataria. They were both of them related to the emperor [*q*].—It is admitted on all ſides that this perſecution was not of any long continuance. Ancient writers, however, are not agreed as to the authority by which it was put an end to: ſome of them repreſenting Domitian himſelf as having retracted the orders he gave for perſecuting the Chriſtians; whilſt others conſider the revocation of them as the act of the ſenate, upon Domitian's death [*r*].

XXXVII. Amidſt

[*q*] Euſeb. *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iii. cap. viii. *et in Chronic.*

[*r*] According to Hegeſippus, (*apud Euſeb. Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iii. cap. xx.) Domitian, on hearing that there were living in Paleſtine certain nephews of that Judas who was called the brother of Chriſt, deſcendants of the royal houſe of David, commanded them to be brought to Rome, and cloſely examined them as to their deſcent, the extent of their property, and the nature of their expectations in regard to the future reign of Chriſt. Theſe good and pious men, he ſays, without heſitation, acknowledged to the emperor that they had ſprung from the ſtock of David; but, at the ſame time, made it appear to him that their condition in life was humble, and that they were deſtitute of every thing like wealth; and, finally, they told him that the future kingdom of Chriſt was not expected to be of this world, but of heaven, and that it would not commence until the end of all things here below. Domitian, it is ſtated, having ſatisfied himſelf as to theſe points, and conſidering the men as objects unworthy to excite apprehenſion, diſmiſſed them to their homes, and publiſhed an edict, forbidding any further perſecution of the Chriſtians in Paleſtine. In like manner Tertullian reports, (*Apologet.* cap. v. p. 61.) that Domitian, not being altogether deaf to the calls of humanity, at length relented of the violence into

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XXXVII. Amidſt all this diſtreſs and calamity, however, the Chriſtian community had to exult in the moſt rapid extenſion of its limits; the labours of the apoſtles and of their companions and diſciples being crowned with ſuch ſucceſs, that churches dedicated to Chriſt had by this time been eſtabliſhed in nearly all the provinces of the empire. Since all theſe churches were conſtituted and formed after the model of that which was firſt planted at Jeruſalem, a review of the conſtitution and regulations of this one church alone will enable us to form a tolerably accurate conception of the form and diſcipline of all theſe primitive Chriſtian aſſemblies.—The Chriſtians at Jeruſalem, then, although they did not ſecede from the public worſhip of the Jews, were yet accuſtomed to hold additional ſolemn aſſemblies of their own, for the purpoſes of devotion, in which, agreeably to apoſtolic inſtitution, they joined in offering up general prayers, and in commemorating the death and paſſion of

into which he had ſuffered himſelf to be betrayed, and liberated all thoſe whom he had either ſent into baniſhment or impriſoned. Lactantius, on the contrary, in his work *de Mortibus Perſequutorum*, cap. iii. ſtates it to have been ſubſequently to the death of Domitian that peace was once more reſtored to the church. Xiphilin alſo, in the *Life of Nerva*, ſays that it was this prince and not Domitian who called back thoſe that had been ſent into baniſhment for their *hereſy*. Oroſius and ſome other writers of inferior authority might, but that I deem it unneceſſary, be quoted to the ſame purport. This difference of teſtimony will at once be accounted for, if it be permitted us to ſuppoſe that Domitian might, ſome ſhort time before his murder, have publiſhed an edict forbidding any further perſecution of the Chriſtians; but that his aſſaſſination followed too quick on this for the Chriſtians in general to experience any material relaxation of their ſufferings until after his death.

CENT. I. our Lord by partaking of the holy ſupper [s]. It

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[s] Unleſs I am altogether deceived, a diſtinct enumeration of all the different branches of divine worſhip uſed in the church of Jeruſalem, is given us by St. Luke in Acts, ii. 42. His words are, ἦσαν δὲ προσκαρτεροῦντες, (1.) τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν Ἀποστόλων, (2.) καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, (3.) καὶ τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου, (4.) καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς. "And they continued ſtedfaſt in the apoſtles' doctrine, and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Now, with the exception of that only which is termed κοινωνια, *i. e.* "communion or fellowſhip," it will, I think, readily be allowed by every one that the account here given refers directly to the manner in which the brethren at Jeruſalem occupied themſelves in their religious aſſemblies. In regard to what is termed communion or fellowſhip, it is not impoſſible indeed but that ſome may heſitate; but it appears to me, that ſince we find it thus inſerted amongſt the acts of the church collectively, propriety demands that we ſhould underſtand it in a ſenſe that may accord with the nature and object of ſuch an aſſembly. For if the term is to be conſidered as referring merely to the exerciſe of a daily private duty, I can ſee no reaſon whatever for its being thus introduced to our notice, amongſt the different branches of the public worſhip. We may regard St. Luke, therefore, I conceive, as preſenting us, in the above-cited paſſage, with a ſketch of the manner in which the Chriſtians at Jeruſalem employed themſelves, when they met together for the purpoſe of joining in the worſhip of God. In the firſt place, one or other of the apoſtles delivered a ſermon or doctrinal diſcourſe, for the inſtruction and edification of the people preſent. Next followed the communion. The word κοινωνία, "communion," is uſed in Scripture, as is well known, in an eſpecial ſenſe for liberality towards the poor. See Rom. xv. 26. 2 Cor. viii. 4. ix. 13. Heb. xiii. 16. The apoſtolic exhortation, therefore, being finiſhed, the brethren who were preſent, it ſeems, came forward with gifts or offerings, which they conſecrated to God for the relief of the poor and ſuch as were in need. This cuſtom of bringing with them to their ſolemn aſſemblies gifts or offerings for the uſe of the community in general, but more eſpecially the poor, and publicly preſenting them previouſly to the celebration of the Lord's ſupper, is of the higheſt antiquity amongſt the Chriſtians, and one which uniformly prevailed in all the churches;

It may be considered as not merely probable but certain, CENT. I.

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churches; and that this usage was founded on the practice of the original church at Jerusalem, will not admit of a doubt. The history of Ananias derives no inconsiderable degree of illustration from hence; whilst, on the other hand, the account which we have of that unfortunate man serves to throw light on the nature of the rite itself. The whole relation, as it is given by St. Luke in Acts, v. 1, et seq. tends, in my opinion, plainly to shew that Ananias made a tender of his offering to the apostles publicly in the face of the whole assembled church. From what is said in verse 2, we may certainly infer that when this transaction took place, the whole of the apostles were gathered together. But that the apostles were accustomed thus to meet together in one place, except it were in general assemblies of the church, is what, from its utter improbability, I am persuaded that no one will take upon him to assert. It should seem that a considerable number of other persons were likewise present; for, in verse 5, St. Luke says that great fear came on all who had heard what Peter said. Indeed, from verse 11, it may be collected that the affair took place in the presence of the whole, or at least a great part of the church. It appears that when these things happened, the apostles had near them οἱ νεώτεροι, certain "young men." Now I take it that these were not merely young men of the ordinary class, but ministers of the apostles and the church, through whom the apostolic mandates were communicated, and to whom it belonged, when the church assembled, to make the necessary arrangements, and provide the members of it with every requisite accommodation. For unless we understand these young men to have been of this description, I do not see how it can be accounted for that they alone should at once rise up, and taking up the dead bodies of Ananias and his wife, carry them out and bury them: but if we regard them as inferior ministers in the church, every difficulty is at once removed, and we see plainly the reason why, without waiting for any directions, they came forward of themselves and performed this melancholy duty. And that there must have been public ministers of this sort in the primitive church, no one who is apprised of its nature, and the form of the religious assemblies of the Christians of that age, can possibly entertain a doubt. Certain persons must ever have been necessary to perform such duties, as the keeping of the

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places of meeting clean and decent, arranging the tables and ſeats, handing and taking away the ſacred volumes, providing the members, when celebrating the feaſts of love, with every thing requiſite, and clearing the tables at the end of theſe ſolemn repaſts, with a variety of other things that might be enumerated. Theſe particulars, I think it muſt be allowed, tend manifeſtly to ſhew that the attempt of Ananias to impoſe on the apoſtles was made in one of the ſolemn religious aſſemblies of the Chriſtians at Jeruſalem. It ſhould ſeem, therefore, that the multitude being gathered together for the purpoſes of divine worſhip, and a ſermon or inſtructive diſcourſe having been addreſſed to them by St. Peter, or ſome other of the apoſtles, this wretched man, whoſe ſoul appears to have been at once the prey of avarice and ambition, coming forward with the reſt, in order to give proof of his κοινωνίαν, "communion or fellowſhip," advanced to the apoſtles, and laid at their feet a part of the money for which he had ſold a portion of land, accompanying this donative with a declaration that, being touched with compaſſion for the brethren who were in need, he had diſpoſed of his patrimony to a purchaſer, and now begged thus to tender the whole of what it ſold for as an offering towards their relief. St. Luke, indeed, who was ſtudious of brevity, records no ſuch ſpeech as having been made by Ananias; but that the man muſt have come forward with a declaration ſomewhat to the above purport, is manifeſt from the terms in which St. Peter's reproof to him is couched. For with what propriety could the apoſtle have upbraided him with the telling of a lie, unleſs he had openly profeſſed that what he offered was the full price for which the land had been ſold? Greedy of reputation and honour, Ananias would fain have paſſed himſelf on the apoſtles and the church as a man overflowing with love and charity towards the brethren; whereas his regard for them had nothing at all extraordinary in it. But although he could have entertained no doubt of the ſacred nature of the apoſtles' character, he was not aware of their poſſeſſing the faculty of divination. It is unneceſſary for me to ſtate what befel him, in conſequence of his audacious duplicity. The corpſe being removed, it is probable that one or other of the apoſtles took occaſion, from what had happened, to addreſs the congregation preſent in the way of admonition. The feaſt of love and celebration of the Lord's ſupper doubtleſs

Saviour arose from the dead was expressly set apart

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doubtless followed. About three hours having elapsed, and the time being nearly arrived for the dismissing of the assembly, the wife of Ananias came in, for the purpose, as I conceive, of partaking in those general prayers with which it was customary for the public service to be concluded. This woman having had the effrontery to re-assert the flagrant untruth which her husband had told, was like him, by an instantaneous visitation, deprived of life. As for the reasons which caused her to absent herself from the early part of the public service, although I am persuaded that it might be possible for me to assign such as would appear by no means unlikely ones, I shall not enter into them in this place, as my doing so would occasion me to digress too widely from the subject which we have at present more immediately under consideration. In these solemn assemblies of the Christians, the κοινωνια, or charitable contribution towards the relief of the necessitous, was followed, according to St. Luke, by the "breaking of bread." The expression "to break bread," when it occurs in the Acts of the Apostles, is for the most part to be understood as signifying the celebration of the Lord's supper, in which bread was broken and distributed: we are not, however, to consider it as exclusively referring to this ordinance of our Saviour, but as also implying that feast of love, of which it was the customary practice of the Christians, even from the very first, always at the same time to partake. That these two things were thus associated together, even in the very earliest infancy of Christianity, is clear from what is said by St. Luke in Acts, ii. 46. For after having there told us that the brethren at Jerusalem continued daily in the breaking of bread at different houses, he immediately adds, that they "did eat their food together with joy and simplicity of heart:" μετελάμβανον τροφῆς ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει καὶ ἀφελότητι της καρδίας. See also Acts, xx. 11. where the breaking of bread, or the celebration of the Lord's supper, is again clearly associated with a feast or repast of the Christians. It appears, therefore, that when, in compliance with our Saviour's injunction, the Christians would break bread together, they also partook of a repast in the nature of a supper. Their meals of this sort were distinguished by an holy mirth, arising out of the love of Christ and of the brethren; but this hilarity had no connection whatever with any thing like sensuality or intemperance. And this is what I understand St. Luke to mean by that simplicity of

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apart for the holding of theſe ſolemn aſſemblies [*t*]. As to the place of theſe meetings, it ſhould ſeem that at the firſt they were held in ſuch of the private houſes of the Chriſtians as had room adequate to the accommodation of any thing like a conſiderable number of perſons. When the church, however, came to conſiſt of many thouſands of people, ſo that it was utterly impoſſible for them to aſſemble with any degree

heart, with which he ſtates the Chriſtians to have eaten their food. For what are we to underſtand by a heart in a ſtate of ſimplicity, but a heart altogether devoid of every ſenſual and depraved appetite? The ſervice terminated with ſome general prayers, which appear to have been diſtinctly recited by one or other of the apoſtles or preſbyters, and repeated by the whole congregation after him.

[*t*] It may, I think, unqueſtionably be taken for a fact, that the firſt day of the week, *i. e.* the day on which our bleſſed Saviour triumphantly burſt the bonds of death, and aroſe from the grave, was expreſsly appointed by the apoſtles themſelves, during their continuance at Jeruſalem, for the holding of theſe general ſolemn aſſemblies of the Chriſtians for the purpoſes of public worſhip. In Acts, xx. 7. we ſee the Chriſtians of Troas aſſembling together on the firſt day after the Jewiſh Sabbath, in order to celebrate the Lord's ſupper and the feaſt of love, and St. Paul addreſſing them, when thus met, in a diſcourſe of no inconſiderable length. For that by μίαν τῶν σαββάτων, the day on which this meeting is ſtated to have been held, was meant the day next immediately following the Jewiſh Sabbath, has been demonſtrated by ſeveral learned writers ſo clearly as to leave no room for diſpute. Now who, I would aſk, can entertain a doubt but that the Chriſtians of Troas, in dedicating this day to divine worſhip, were guided by apoſtolic authority, and the practice of the church at Jeruſalem, which it is well known that all the other Chriſtian aſſemblies took for their model? or, who can believe that the apoſtle Paul, intimately acquainted as he muſt have been with the diſcipline of the church at Jeruſalem, would have ſanctioned the appointment of any other day for the public worſhip than the one on which he knew that the reſt of the apoſtles were accuſtomed to hold their ſolemn religious aſſemblies in that city?

of

of convenience in one place, it is probable that the members diſtributed themſelves into claſſes, or, as we ſhould ſay in modern language, pariſhes, to each of which was aſſigned a ſeparate place of meeting, for the purpoſes of divine worſhip [*u*]. The preſidency or chief ſuperintendance

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[*u*] If I may give myſelf credit for any diſcernment at all, I am ſure I plainly diſcern this, that the vaſt multitude of perſons converted by the apoſtles to Chriſtianity at Jeruſalem muſt have been diſtributed into ſeveral companies or claſſes, and that each company or claſs had its own proper preſbyters and miniſters, as alſo its ſeparate place of meeting for the purpoſes of religious worſhip. For let any one, who may find a difficulty in believing this, figure to himſelf a church compoſed of eight or ten thouſand perſons, and then reflect whether ſuch a multitude of people could poſſibly have aſſembled together in one place, with any degree of convenience or advantage to themſelves;—to ſay nothing of the very imminent danger to which they would neceſſarily on ſuch occaſions have been expoſed, in a city teeming with hoſtility to the diſciples of Chriſt, and in which any meeting together whatever of the Chriſtians was ſeverely denounced. Could it have been poſſible, let him aſk himſelf, for them to have joined in the celebration of the Lord's ſupper, and the feaſt of love connected with it, with any ſort of order or convenience? The more he ſhall reflect on this, the more apparent muſt, in my opinion, the impoſſibility of the thing become to him. Now if it be granted that the church at Jeruſalem muſt of neceſſity have been claſſed or divided into ſeveral minor aſſemblies, it follows of courſe that over each of theſe aſſemblies there muſt have preſided certain perſons in the character of preſbyters, in order to regulate the concerns of the meeting, and ſee that all things were conducted with propriety and prudence. For a flock without ſhepherds is ſure to wander out of the way, and take the very road which leads to the ruin of its own intereſts and welfare. Theſe things then being admitted, it appears to me that, diveſting the ſubject of ſuch particulars as may evidently be referred either to the wiſdom or the cupidity of much more recent times, the origin of what we term *pariſhes* may, with every ſort of probability, be deduced from the arrangement and diſtribution of the primitive and parent church at Jeruſalem. I do not know

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ance of the whole church reſted with the apoſtles themſelves. Next, under theſe, were certain men

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whether I may go ſo far as to ſay that I have the authority of St. Luke expreſsly on my ſide, when he ſays, in Acts, ii. 46. and v. 42. that the Chriſtians at Jeruſalem aſſembled together, κατ' οἶκον, to break bread. The commentators in general conceive theſe words to indicate, that the Chriſtians did not hold their meetings always in the ſame place, but ſometimes in this houſe, ſometimes in that, with a view to avoid, as far as poſſible, diſturbance by the Jews. But for my own part, I cannot ſee any thing whatever that ſhould prevent us from giving to the expreſſion κατ' οἶκον, the meaning of *in diverſis domibus*, "in different houſes;" and underſtanding the apoſtle in the ſame ſenſe as if he had expreſſed himſelf here as he has done in Acts, viii. 3. xx. 20. and written κατὰ τὰς οἰκίας, which is the ſame as ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις. Indeed this latter ſenſe is by far more ſuitable to the words than the former one, ſince it is certain that the ſingular number is moſt frequently put for the plural. In the ancient Vulgate, we find the expreſſion taken in this ſenſe; the tranſlator not altogether unaptly rendering the Greek words κατ' οἶκον by *circa domos*. Nor did it eſcape our countryman B. Luther, that this was the way in which they ought to be underſtood; and he well tranſlates them, "*Hin und her in den haeuſern.*" And it appears to me, that St. Luke is to be conſidered as ſpeaking in alluſion to theſe houſes in which the brethren at Jeruſalem were accuſtomed to aſſemble, when he ſtates St. Paul, before his converſion, to have entered κατὰ τὰς οἰκίας, "into the houſes," and dragged away the Chriſtians captive from thence. Acts, viii. 3. For I can by no means perſuade myſelf, that Paul and his attendants burſt into the private houſes of the citizens of Jeruſalem, and dragged away from thence any men and women whom he might ſuſpect of being Chriſtians. Is it to be believed that in Jeruſalem, a city at that time under the dominion of the Romans, any man would have been permitted to violate at pleaſure the rights of peaceable citizens, who had never been convicted of apoſtaſy from the religion of their anceſtors? I conceive, therefore, that the houſes into which Paul thus entered were thoſe in which the Chriſtians were wont to hold their meetings, during the night ſeaſon, for the purpoſes of divine worſhip; and that taking the opportunity, with the aſſiſtance of the ſervants of the high prieſt, to break in upon the brethren at the time

men of approved faith and authority, who were diſtinguiſhed by the Jewiſh appellation of preſbyters or elders. They were no doubt appointed to their office by the apoſtles, with the conſent of the people, and gave their counſel, voice, and aſſiſtance in the government of the church at large, or certain parts of it. A conſiderable portion of the members of this primitive church

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time of their being thus aſſembled, he laid hold of as many of them as were not able to make their eſcape, and put them in bonds, as offenders taken in the very act itſelf. The ſentiments which I have thus been led to entertain reſpecting the partition or diſtribution of the church at Jeruſalem, occaſion me to regard what St. Luke ſays, in Acts, xv. of the aſſembly, or, to uſe a more familiar term, the council of that church, convened in order to decide on the controverſy that had ariſen at Antioch, in a light ſomewhat different from that in which it is commonly viewed. If merely the words of the divine hiſtorian are to be taken into the account, we muſt indeed unavoidably conclude, as every commentator whom I have had the opportunity hitherto of conſulting has done, namely, that the whole multitude of Chriſtians who dwelt at Jeruſalem, met together and diſcuſſed the queſtion propoſed by the deputies of the church at Antioch. But if we bring this concluſion to the teſt of reaſon, the thing appears at once to be utterly incredible. For what houſe could there poſſibly have been in Jeruſalem capable of containing ſuch an immenſe number of perſons? or, how could ſuch a multitude have aſſembled together in one place, in a city ſwarming with enemies and informers, but under the greateſt degree of dread, and at the utmoſt peril of their lives and every thing they might poſſeſs? I can, therefore, ſcarcely permit myſelf to doubt that this aſſembly or council conſiſted merely of the apoſtles and preſbyters, and a certain number of ſelect perſons, to whom the church had delegated its power and authority; and that by ὅλην τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, "the whole church," which St. Luke ſtates, at verſe 22, to have aſſented to the propoſal of St. James, we ought to underſtand merely a certain part of it, which had been inveſted with the power and authority of determining the propoſed queſtion.

having

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having to ſtruggle with poverty and diſtreſs, their neceſſities were liberally ſupplied by the bounty of ſuch of their brethren as were in better circumſtances: indeed to ſuch an extent did this ſpirit of charity prevail amongſt the firſt Chriſtians, that St. Luke repreſents them as having had all things in common [*v*]. The management and diſpoſal of theſe contributions of the brethren, towards the relief of the neceſſitous, were at firſt entruſted to certain men ſelected by the apoſtles from amongſt the Hebrews or indigenous Jews; but, it being complained of that theſe perſons were guilty of partiality in the diſtribution of the alms, the church, by the direction of the apoſtles, appointed ſeven others from amongſt the Greeks or foreigners, for the purpoſe of taking care that

[*v*] There is an ancient opinion, (it is not, however, older than the fourth century,) that the ſame community of goods exiſted amongſt the members of the church at Jeruſalem, as did of old amongſt the Eſſenes, and does at preſent amongſt the monks. But the notion is utterly deſtitute of any thing like a ſolid foundation, and has no other ſupport than merely the words of St. Luke, who, in Acts, ii. 44. iv. 32. ſays that the Chriſtians had all things in common:—words which, however they may at firſt ſtrike the ear, can certainly never of themſelves juſtify any ſuch concluſion; ſince an abundance of examples might be brought from ancient authors to prove that we may with the greateſt propriety annex to them a very different ſenſe, and conſider them as implying a communion merely of the *uſe*, not of *poſſeſſion*. Indeed that ſuch is the acceptation in which they ought to be taken, is manifeſt from the addreſs of St. Peter to Ananias, (Acts, v. 4.) without recurring to other authority. The reader who may wiſh to purſue this ſubject further will find it more amply diſcuſſed in a particular treatiſe of mine, *de vera Natura Communionis Bonorum in Eccleſia Hieroſolymitana*, which ſtands the firſt in the ſecond volume of my *Diſſertationes ad Hiſtoriam Eccleſiaſtic. pertinentes*.

this

this branch of the church might for the future experience no ſimilar kind of injury [*w*]. The power

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[*w*] Reſpecting theſe ſeven men, to whom the care of the poor was committed by the church of Jeruſalem, I cannot ſay that my ſentiments altogether correſpond with thoſe which it ſhould ſeem are entertained by the generality of people. From the very firſt riſe of the church at Jeruſalem, there were without queſtion certain perſons whoſe office it was to take care of the poor: it is not poſſible that the church could have been without them. Had the apoſtles taken upon themſelves the manaſgment and diſtribution of the alms, there can be no doubt but that they would have diſpenſed them religiouſly, and without the leaſt partiality; nor would there have been any grounds afforded for thoſe complaints of the foreign Jews againſt the natives, which gave riſe to the appointment of the ſeven men. For who can poſſibly ſuppoſe that the apoſtles could have been either ſo inattentive or ſo regardleſs of their duty, as to give to the widows of Jews a preference to thoſe of Greeks? In Acts, vi. 1. the Greeks or foreign Jews are not repreſented as murmuring againſt the apoſtles, on account of the improper diſtribution of the alms, but againſt the Hebrews or native Jews generally. It appears, therefore, (and it is a circumſtance particularly neceſſary to be attended to,) that before thoſe ſeven men were elected, there were certain perſons at Jeruſalem, appointed either, as is moſt likely, by the apoſtles alone, or otherwiſe by the ſuffrages of the people in general, to make diſtribution of the alms offered by the affluent for the relief of the neceſſitous: in ſhort, there were deacons in point of fact, before there were any ſuch by name. Theſe miniſters, however, having been ſelected from amongſt the indigenous Jews, who in number far exceeded the foreign ones, it was found that they were not ſtrictly impartial, but were apt to lean a little more than was right in favour of their fellow citizens, and thoſe of their own country, and diſcovered a greater readineſs in relieving the widows of native Jews than the others. The foreign Jews, whom St. Luke terms Greeks, being much diſſatisfied at this, and murmuring greatly againſt the Hebrews on account thereof, the apoſtles convoked the members of the church, and commanded them to nominate ſeven men of approved faith and integrity, to whom the management of the concerns of the poor might without apprehenſion be committed. The people complied with theſe directions,

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directions, and choſe by their ſuffrages the appointed number of men; ſix of them being Jews by birth, and one a proſelyte, of the name of Nicolaus. They then brought them to the apoſtles, who conſecrated them by prayer and the laying on them their hands. Theſe ſeven deacons, as we commonly call them, were all of them choſen from amongſt the foreign Jews. This I think is ſufficiently evident, from the circumſtance of their names being all of them Greek ones: for the Jews of Paleſtine were not accuſtomed to adopt names for their children from the Greek, but from the Hebrew or Syriac languages. Theſe circumſtances conſidered, I cannot by any means bring myſelf to believe that theſe ſeven men were entruſted with the care of the whole of the poor at Jeruſalem. For can any one ſuppoſe that the Hebrews would have conſented that the relief of their own widows and poor ſhould be thus committed to the diſcretion of the Jews of the foreign claſs? The native Jews would, in this caſe, have been liable to experience the ſame injuſtice from the foreign brethren, as the latter had to complain of, whilſt the alms were at the diſpoſal of the Hebrews; and inſtead, therefore, of at once ſtriking at the root of the evil which they propoſed to cure, the apoſtles would, by ſuch an arrangement, have merely applied to it a very uncertain kind of remedy. Beſides, the indigenous Jews made no complaints againſt thoſe who had hitherto managed the concerns of the poor; and conſequently there could be no neceſſity for their diſmiſſal from office. It appears to me, therefore, clear beyond a doubt that thoſe ſeven men were not inveſted with the care of the poor in general, but were appointed merely as curators of the widows and poor of the foreigners or Greeks; and that the others continued under the guardianſhip of thoſe who, prior to the appointment of the ſeven, were entruſted with the ſuperintendance and diſcretionary relief of the whole.—Camp. Vitringa ſaw the matter evidently in this light, as is plain from his work *de Synagoga vetere*, lib. iii. part ii. cap. v. p. 928. In regard to what is urged in oppoſition to him by B. Juſt. Hen. Bohmer, *Diſſ.* vii. *Juris Eccleſ. antiqui*, § xxii. p. 378. it is of very little weight indeed. In fine, I do not ſee how it is poſſible for any one to be of a different opinion from that which I thus ſtate myſelf to have formed on this ſubject, unleſs he maintain either that there were no perſons whoſe office it was to take care of the

poor

and miniſters, and of determining controverſies, was

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poor in the church at Jeruſalem, prior to the appointment of theſe ſeven men,—or that, upon the election of the latter, the primitive curators or guardians of the poor were diſmiſſed as perſons unworthy of being any longer continued in the truſt. But of theſe two poſitions, the one is utterly deſtitute of every ſort of probability, and the other implies a diſregard of the dictates of equity and fraternal love. As to the reaſon which cauſed the number of theſe men to be fixed at ſeven, I conceive that it is to be found in the ſtate of the church at Jeruſalem, at the time of their appointment. The Chriſtians in that city, it ſtrikes me, were moſt likely divided into ſeven claſſes; the members of each of theſe diviſions having a ſeparate place of aſſembly. It was therefore deemed expedient, I take it, that ſeven curators ſhould be appointed, in order that every diviſion might be furniſhed with an officer or ſuperintendant of its own, whoſe immediate duty it ſhould be to take care that the widows and the poor of the foreigners ſhould come in for an equitable ſhare of the alms and benefactions, and to ſee that due relief was adminiſtered according to the neceſſities of the different individuals. It appears to me impoſſible for any one to aſſign any more probable reaſon for the adoption of this number, unleſs perhaps he ſhould pretend to find ſome ſacred or myſtical qualities in it; but the futility of any conjecture of this ſort would be manifeſt on the ſlighteſt ſcrutiny. I cannot, therefore, help conſidering it as a mark of great ſuperſtitious weakneſs in ſome of the ancient churches, that they ſhould have given their ſanction to ſuch a notion as that there ſhould, in no caſe, be more or leſs than ſeven deacons appointed, leſt the apoſtolic rule in this reſpect,—a rule which cannot be ſhewn to exiſt anywhere but in fancy, ſhould be broken through or infringed: and I think that thoſe had much more reaſon on their ſide who confined themſelves to no particular number, but appointed as many deacons as the ſtate and condition of the church appeared to require. But it is not impoſſible that the authority of St. Luke may be brought forward againſt me on this occaſion, and I ſhall perhaps be told that he repreſents the whole church of Jeruſalem as having been convened by the apoſtles, and the whole church as joining in the election of the ſeven men, (Acts, vi. 2. 5.); and that from hence it ſhould ſeem reaſonable to conclude that the tutelary powers with which theſe men were inveſted related not

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not merely to a particular branch of the people, but to the multitude at large: for if the Greeks were alone to be benefited by their labours, the Greeks alone would have been the proper perſons to make the appointment. But I cannot ſay that I perceive much force in this objection.—For not to notice that in many parts of Scripture the whole of a thing is mentioned, when only a part thereof is meant to be underſtood, it is evident that equity, no leſs than the critical ſituation of the church in thoſe times, moſt urgently demanded that the Hebrews ſhould not be excluded from being preſent at, and taking a part in, the whole of this tranſaction. For the Hebrews contributed in no leſs a degree than the Greeks towards the ſupport of the fund, from whence the relief for the poor was drawn; and a ſeparation pregnant with the greateſt danger at that period might well have been apprehended, had the Greeks been ordered to treat of their concerns ſeparately, and a ſet of public miniſters been appointed, without the Hebrews being called to take a ſhare in their election. That St Luke does not abſolutely give us this ſtatement of the matter is a circumſtance of no conſequence whatever; ſince we know that the ſacred penman contented himſelf with ſhortly touching on the leading points of the early hiſtory of the church, and left to his readers a very ample ſcope for filling up and perfecting, by means of meditation and conjecture, what they might thus receive from him under the form of a ſketch or merely in outline. Entertaining then theſe ſentiments on the ſubject, I cannot but feel myſelf compelled to withhold my aſſent from many things which, in later times, have been contended for by ſeveral perſons of no ſmall weight and erudition, reſpecting theſe deacons of the church at Jeruſalem. For the moſt part they maintain, that it was not a function of the ordinary kind with which theſe ſeven men were inveſted, but one of an extraordinary nature; that their office was not one which was common to the church in general, but excluſively appropriate to the church at Jeruſalem; and that the deacons, therefore, of whom St Paul in his epiſtles makes mention, muſt have been of a different order from thoſe of Jeruſalem. In ſupport of this opinion they adduce the following reaſons: 1ſt, It is urged that the appointment of the ſeven men at Jeruſalem was rendered neceſſary by the communion of goods which prevailed in the church of that city; but that

apoſtles, although inveſted with divine authority, either

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this kind of communion being unknown in the other Chriſtian churches, there could be no occaſion for their appointing any officers of a ſimilar kind. But this reaſon, inaſmuch as it is founded entirely on the ancient erroneous notion reſpecting the nature of the communion of goods in the church at Jeruſalem, which may now, I think, be conſidered as wholly exploded, falls at once of itſelf to the ground. There was unqueſtionably the ſame community of goods in all the other early churches as in that of Jeruſalem; and I have no heſitation in ſaying that whoever may have entertained the notion, that the individual poſſeſſion or ownerſhip of things was given up and renounced by the members of the church of that city, has ſuffered himſelf to be groſsly impoſed upon by monkiſh artifice. It is moreover moſt clearly manifeſt from St. Luke's account of the affair, that it was not a communion of goods which occaſioned the appointment of theſe ſeven men, but the deſire of preventing for the future any partiality in the adminiſtration of relief to the neceſſitous. Had no ſuch tendency to partiality found its way into the church at Jeruſalem, a community of goods, even ſuppoſing it to have been adopted there, might have been very well regulated and adminiſtered without the ſuperintendance of any ſuch officers as theſe ſeven men. 2dly, They ſay that the deacons of whom St. Paul makes mention in his epiſtles, and ſtill more particularly thoſe who in after-ages diſcharged the functions of deacons in the church, had not the care of the poor committed to them, but were occupied in duties of another nature; and that, therefore, they muſt have been of an order altogether different from the ſeven men in the church of Jeruſalem. But the inſufficiency of this reaſon alſo may, I think, be made appear without much difficulty. For if it were true, as theſe learned perſons aſſert it to be, that neither the deacons alluded to by St. Paul, nor thoſe of after-ages, were entruſted with the care of the poor, it ſtill would not amount to a proof that theſe deacons did not derive their origin from the appointment of the ſeven men in the church of Jeruſalem. An abundance of inſtances might eaſily be brought forward, to prove that the titles of offices are frequently retained without the leaſt alteration, although the duties attached to thoſe offices may, from various cauſes, have gradually undergone a change. But in my opinion the fact was not ſuch in reality, as it is thus aſſumed to have been: for

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for although it is true that the deacons of after-times had other duties aſſigned them to fulfil, yet in none of the churches were they altogether removed from the management and ſuperintendance of the relief of the poor. As the riches of the church increaſed, the biſhops contrived by degrees to draw into their own hands the more honourable and lucrative part of the charge; but as to ſuch branches of it as had any thing of trouble or inconvenience connected with them, they willingly left them under the ſuperintendance and management of the deacons. Amongſt the Latins, the churches from whence the poor, the ſtrangers, the widows, the old people, and the orphans, had the alms dealt out to them, and adjoining to which were houſes or apartments in which the poor were maintained, were always of old denominated *diaconiæ*, (indeed the term is not even yet become obſolete,) and the perſons who had the care of ſuch churches and houſes were always taken from the order of deacons. Vid. Lud. Anton. Muratori *Antiquitates Italicæ medii Ævi*, tom. iii. p. 571, et ſeq. Du Cange *in Gloſſar. Latin. med. Ævi voc. Diaconia, Diaconites, Diaconus.* At Rome, even down to our own times, we ſee the cardinal deacons, as they are called, have the care of churches of this kind, from the revenues of which the poor are furniſhed with ſubſiſtence, and to which there are attached certain houſes for refection, and what are termed hoſpitals. Add to this, that all the ancient churches were unanimous in referring back the origin of their deacons to the church of Jeruſalem; and on this account the greater part of them, as is well known, would never conſent that the number of them ſhould be more than ſeven. But why ſhould I multiply words? There muſt have been, as I have already ſhewn, certain perſons who acted as curators or guardians of the poor at Jeruſalem, prior to the appointment of thoſe ſeven men to that office; nor could any church in that early age, when it was moſt religiouſly provided that no brother or ſiſter ſhould want, in fact be without ſuch. The thing ſpeaks for itſelf; and with ſuch an obſtacle in his way, I conceive that ſcarcely any one will find it an eaſy matter to perſuade himſelf that the function with which thoſe ſeven men were inveſted was of an extraordinary nature, or that it ought to be regarded as having been by any means excluſively appropriate to the ſituation and circumſtances of the church of Jeruſalem. In ſaying this,

without the knowledge and concurrence of the general

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this, however, I would be understood as disposed most readily to admit, that this office was not of divine origin, or instituted by our Saviour himself: for St. Paul, in enumerating the offices that were of divine institution in the Christian church, 1 Cor. xii. 28. Ephes. iv. 11. makes no mention whatever of deacons, although in other places he points out what manner of persons it was fitting that they should be: a circumstance that I could wish to press on the attention of those who contend that Christ himself instituted the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons; and that, therefore, such churches as have no deacons are to be regarded as defective in their constitution. Just. Hen. Boehmer, an eminent and deservedly illustrious lawyer of our own times, has started a conjecture that the seven men above alluded to were presbyters of the church of Jerusalem. This notion he appears to have espoused, with a view to its yielding him assistance in proving that our modern spiritual teachers possess nothing in common with the presbyters of the primitive church, and that no distinctions were ever introduced by Christ and his apostles amongst either the teachers or the people. *Dissert. Juris Eccles. antiqui*, diss. vii. § xx. p. 373, et seq. Long before this, Bilson bishop of Winchester, had endeavoured to establish a point, which, could it be ascertained for a fact, would strongly support the opinion of Boehmer, namely, that under the denomination of presbyters, in the books of the New Testament, deacons are also included. See his work *on the perpetual Government of Christ's Church*, cap. x. p. 179, 180. Lond. 1611, in 4to. But amongst all the different passages which he cites in order to prove this, there is not a single one that can be said to yield him even a moderate degree of support. Dr. Gilbert Burnet, another English bishop, and one who has obtained for himself a most distinguished rank amongst the writers of our own age, appears disposed to place the seven men in question on a level nearly with the apostles themselves. The deacons of whom St. Paul makes mention, and for whom his instructions were designed, this prelate will not allow to have been either inferior ministers of the church, or curators of the poor, but contends that they were presbyters. See his *History of the Rights of Princes in the disposing of Ecclesiastical Benefices*, Pref. p. xiv, et seq. The reader will perceive that in this opinion also there is something nearly allied to that of Boehmer. But it is evident that all these learned writers, as well as others, who reject the ancient

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general body of Chriſtians, of which the church was compoſed [*x*].

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[*x*] There can be no doubt but that the apoſtles might have filled up a vacancy in their own number, without any reference to the multitude: yet we find them convoking the general body of Chriſtians to take a ſhare in this matter. When the ſeven men were to be appointed, the whole affair was, we ſee, ſubmitted by the apoſtles to the judgment of the church at large. When a queſtion aroſe at Antioch reſpecting the authority of the law of Moſes, (Acts, xv.) the apoſtles, inaſmuch as they were conſtituted by Chriſt himſelf expounders of the divine will, might with the greateſt reaſon have taken the cognizance and determination thereof to themſelves; yet we find them here again convoking and taking council with the whole church. I conceive it to be unneceſſary, or otherwiſe it would be eaſy to point out ſeveral paſſages in St. Paul's epiſtles, which lead to the ſame inference with the above.

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notion reſpecting the ſeven men appointed by the church of Jeruſalem, and endeavour to impoſe on us a new one of their own in its ſtead, do ſo merely with a view to the ſupport of other opinions, which it is their object to eſtabliſh. Thus Boehmer, by converting the deacons of old into preſbyters, would prove that our modern ſpiritual teachers bear no reſemblance whatever to the preſbyters of the primitive church. Bilſon, a defender of epiſcopacy, found himſelf oppoſed by what St. Paul ſays in 1 Tim. v. 17.; and from which paſſage it has been uſual to infer that it did not belong to all the preſbyters of the primitive church to teach, but that ſome were appointed to ſee to its well ordering and government; and in conformity to this, we ſee the preſbyterians, as they are called, in addition to their teaching preſbyters, appoint others whom they term ruling or governing preſbyters. But the epiſcopalians will not admit of any ſuch preſbyters as thoſe of the latter kind; and therefore, by way of obviating the force of the paſſage above referred to, Bilſon maintains, though without the leaſt foundation, that by the term preſbyters we ought in this place to underſtand St. Paul as meaning not only preſbyters but deacons, and that thoſe preſbyters amongſt the ancient Chriſtians who did not preach were none other but deacons. With a view to give ſome degree of colour and authority to this haſty and ill-founded opinion, he contends that the term preſbyter was commonly

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commonly applied of old both to presbyters or teachers and to deacons. The object of Burnet was to drive the presbyterians from another ground, on which they were wont to assail episcopacy. The presbyterians, it is well known, assert that in the books of the New Testament mention is made of no more than two classes of the sacred order, *viz.* those of presbyters and deacons; and hence they maintain, that in the apostolic church the degree of bishops, according to the modern sense of the term, was altogether unknown. Burnet, by way of rendering their plan of attack on this ground ineffectual, would willingly persuade us that by the term presbyters, in the writings of the New Testament, are meant bishops in the modern sense of the word; and that the persons whom we therein find styled deacons, were of the same degree as those to whom in after-times the title of presbyters was given. From these examples it is plain that to such an extent may the spirit of party, and a desire to vindicate a favourite hypothesis prevail, that even the wisest men shall not be proof against their deception, but become the advocates of opinions that have no authority or probability whatever to support them. What Bilson has advanced, I regard as utterly unworthy of any thing like a serious refutation; for I will take upon me to affirm that, unless it be by the assistance of perversion and wrong interpretation, there is not a single passage in the New Testament to be produced in his favour. Burnet, which is much to be wondered at in a man of his penetration and sagacity, did not perceive that the opinion which he wished to inculcate, with a view to support episcopacy, was in fact calculated to make directly against it. For let us suppose for a moment, that in those passages where the term presbyter occurs we ought to understand it in the sense of bishop according to modern acceptation, and that where deacons are spoken of we should consider presbyters as meant, and the conclusion unavoidably must be, that the first churches had each of them several such bishops: a conclusion which, if supported by just premises, would of necessity derogate most materially from the dignity and authority of the episcopal character. In Acts, xx. 17. we find St. Paul calling to him the presbyters or elders of the church of Ephesus. According to bishop Burnet, then, the church of Ephesus had not merely one, but several bishops. St. James admonishes

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moniſhes the ſick to call for τὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῆς ἐκκλησίας, "the preſbyters or elders of the church." Truſting to the ſame authority, therefore, we muſt conclude that each individual church had a number of biſhops belonging to it. St. Paul directs Titus, whom he had left in Crete, to ordain preſbyters or elders in every city. Tit. i. 5. Conformably then to the expoſition of the above mentioned learned prelate, we muſt underſtand this as meaning that a variety of biſhops were to be appointed in every city. But will any biſhop, let me aſk, endure to hear of this? I intentionally paſs over ſome other arguments which would prove this notion to be altogether groundleſs, ſince I ſhould conſider it a waſte of time to combat, at greater length, a propoſition, in which I cannot perceive even a ſhadow of probability. If the opinion of Boehmer be adopted, *viz.* that the ſeven men appointed by the church of Jeruſalem were preſbyters, it muſt neceſſarily be admitted that the preſbyters ordained by the apoſtles themſelves, or by their direction, in the various other churches, were altogether of a different order from thoſe of Jeruſalem: for it is clear beyond a queſtion, from what is ſaid in St. Paul's epiſtles concerning preſbyters, that thoſe there ſpoken of had nothing to do with the relief of the poor, or the diſtribution of the alms, but were ſolely occupied in inſtructing the brethren and governing the church. To refer but to one paſſage out of many, for they are all in ſubſtance the ſame, conſult the picture of a preſbyter or biſhop, as it is given in 1 Tim. iii. 1. But that the functions of the preſbyters of the church of Jeruſalem ſhould have differed in ſo material a point as this from thoſe of the preſbyters of any other church, (the church of Epheſus for example, whoſe preſbyters are directed by St. Paul, Acts, xx. 28. to occupy themſelves in feeding the church of God, and warding off from it all noxious errors,) is ſo incredible and contradictory to every kind of probability, that I cannot believe it poſſible for any one poſſeſſed of even a common degree of erudition to be ſo far impoſed on as to receive it for the fact. Indeed, when I conſider the arguments by which this illuſtrious juriſt has endeavoured to eſtabliſh his opinion, I cannot help ſuſpecting that they could never have wrought in a mind of ſuch intelligence as his, that conviction which he would willingly have had them produce in the minds of other

by the apoſtles themſelves, or their companions, with the aſſent of the multitude, to preſide over it,

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other people. The arguments to which I allude are two. The firſt of them is drawn from the ſilence of St. Luke. This inſpired writer, it is urged, makes no mention whatever of any election of preſbyters in the church of Jeruſalem; and therefore we muſt regard theſe ſeven men as having been the preſbyters of that church. But ſurely it cannot be poſſible that any one ſhould be ſo ignorant as not to know, that there are ſeveral things of no ſmall moment paſſed over by St. Luke without the leaſt notice: and with regard to his ſilence reſpecting the election of preſbyters in the church of Jeruſalem, I account for it by ſuppoſing that their firſt appointment was coëval with the eſtabliſhment of the church itſelf. And in this place, I muſt beg once more to direct the reader's attention towards thoſe νεώτεροι or νεανίσκοι, "young men," who carried forth the dead body of Ananias, Acts, vi. 6. 10. and whom I have above ſhewn to have been public miniſters of the church. For unleſs I am much deceived, the title thus given to them is of itſelf a proof that there were others at that time belonging to the church who were termed πρεσβύτεροι, "elders;" and if I am right in this, it is manifeſt that, beſides the apoſtles, there were preſbyters in the church of Jeruſalem ſome time before the appointment of the ſeven men took place. And that ſuch muſt have been the fact will appear ſtill more certain, if we conſider how utterly incredible it is that a church ſo vaſtly numerous as that of Jeruſalem was, and divided as it muſt have been of neceſſity into various minor aſſemblies, to each of which a ſeparate place of meeting was aſſigned, could by any means have diſpenſed with the want of a ſet of men of this deſcription. As for thoſe that are termed "the young men," I have little or no doubt but that they were the deacons, to whom the care of the poor was committed by the apoſtles before the election of the ſeven men; other duties, however, being then, in like manner as in after-times, annexed to their office. Let us now examine what force there may be in the ſecond argument adduced by this eminent civilian, and to which he attributes a conſiderable degree of weight. It is clearly manifeſt, ſays he, from Acts, xi. 29, 30. that the preſbyters or elders of the church of Jeruſalem had the management of the concerns of the poor; and therefore theſe preſbyters could have been none others than thoſe ſeven men, to whom the care of the poor

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was committed. On this argument he expatiates at great length, for the purpoſe principally of ſhewing that, in addition to their other duties, it alſo belonged to the preſbyters of the church, in the ſecond, third, and fourth centuries, to take care that the neceſſities of the poor were relieved. But as no one ever entertained a doubt of this, I ſhall merely inquire whether what is ſaid in Acts, xi. 29, 30. will juſtify the inference which this very learned writer would draw from it. The Chriſtians of Antioch, we are there told, being given to underſtand that many of the brethren belonging to the church of Jeruſalem were in want, determined to ſend relief unto them by the hands of Paul and Barnabas. Theſe contributions are ſtated to have been ſent to the preſbyters or elders; and hence this learned author concludes that the preſbyters were thoſe ſeven men who had been elected curators or guardians of the poor. But in this concluſion of his there are confounded together two things altogether diſtinct, *viz.* the cuſtody or care of the charitable fund in the aggregate, and the daily diſtribution of what might be neceſſary for the relief of the different individuals in diſtreſs. That the ſeven men were never entruſted with the firſt of theſe, muſt be evident to any one who will attentively read the hiſtory of their appointment. It was the latter, or the daily diſtribution of relief to the neceſſitous, which was committed to their management. The Chriſtians of Antioch, therefore, judged rightly in ſending their contributions, not to the deacons, but to the preſbyters or elders. The only inference, then, that can properly be drawn from this paſſage is, that in conſequence of the diſturbance which had ariſen in the church of Jeruſalem, reſpecting the improper diſtinction that was made in adminiſtering relief to the poor, the apoſtles, by way of preventing, for the future, even a ſhadow of ſuſpicion from lighting on themſelves, came to the reſolution of having nothing more to do with the cuſtody of the poor's fund, but transferred the keeping thereof to the preſbyters or elders. Before theſe diſſenſions took place, it was the practice to lay whatever might be deſigned for the relief of the poor, at the apoſtles' feet, during one or other of the ſolemn aſſemblies of the brethren. At that time, therefore, the poor's fund was at the diſpoſal of the apoſtles; and certain perſons of the Hebrew nation were entruſted by them

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dence of old age, rather than age itself, in those who bore it; the latter had an allusion to the nature of the function wherewith they were charged [y]. Of these presbyters it is a commonly received opinion, (founded on the words of St. Paul, 1 Tim. v. 17.) that a part only took upon them to instruct the people, and deliver exhortations to them in their solemn assemblies, after the manner of the apostles; and that such of them as had not either received from nature, or acquired by means of art, the qualifications requisite for this, applied themselves to promote the prosperity and general interests of the church in some other way [z]. But since St. Paul requires

them with the distribution of relief to those who were in want, according to their necessities. The integrity of these inferior ministers, however, having been called in question, the apostles recommended that the foreigners should elect certain curators or guardians for the poor of their own class; and declining to have any thing further to do with the pecuniary concerns of the church, directed that the custody of the contributions for the relief of the necessitous should thenceforward be committed to the presbyters.

[y] That the terms *bishops* and *presbyters* are applied promiscuously, as synonymous in the books of the New Testament, is most clearly manifest from Acts, xx. 17. 28. Philipp. i. 1. Tit. i. 5. 7. With regard to the term *presbyter*, the reader will find its force and use well illustrated by Camp. Vitringa, in his work *de Synagog. vetere*, lib. iii. part i. cap. i. p. 609.; and also by that eminently learned theologist and ornament of his country, Jo. Bened. Carpzovius, in his *Exercitationes in Epist. ad Hebr. ex Philon.* p. 499.

[z] Acceding, as I readily do, to the commonly received interpretation of St. Paul's words, 1 Tim. v. 17, and feeling not at all inclined to controvert the opinion of those who, chiefly on the strength of this passage, maintain that in the infancy of Christianity it was not the province of every presbyter to teach; I yet must own, that without some further support than what is afforded to it by these words of the apostle, the distinction between teaching and

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quires in expreſs terms that a preſbyter or biſhop ſhould poſſeſs the faculty of teaching, it is ſcarcely

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ruling preſbyters does not appear to me to be in every reſpect ſo well eſtabliſhed as to be placed beyond the reach of doubt. In no part whatever, I believe, of the New Teſtament is the verb κοπιάω made uſe of, either abſolutely or conjoined with the words ἐν κυρίῳ or ἐν λόγῳ, to expreſs the ordinary labour of teaching and inſtructing the people. But I obſerve that St. Paul, in various places, applies this verb, and alſo the noun κόπος, ſometimes ſeparately, and at other times connected with certain other words, in an eſpecial ſenſe to that kind of labour which he and other holy perſons encountered in propagating the light of the goſpel, and bringing over the Jews and heathens to a faith in Chriſt. In Rom. xvi. 12. (to paſs over what is ſaid in verſe 6. of one Mary) the apoſtle deſcribes Tryphæna and Tryphoſa as labouring in the Lord; and Perſis, another woman, as having laboured much in the Lord, or, which is the ſame thing, for the ſake of, or in the cauſe of the Lord. Now what interpretation can be given to this, unleſs it be that theſe women had aſſiduouſly employed themſelves in adding to the Lord's flock, and in initiating perſons of their own ſex in the principles of Chriſtianity? The word appears to me to have the ſame ſenſe in 1 Cor. iv. 12. where St. Paul ſays of himſelf, καὶ κοπιῶμεν, ἐργαζόμενοι ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσὶ, "and we labour, working with our own hands." By labouring, I here underſtand him to have meant labouring in the Lord, or for Chriſt; and the ſenſe of the paſſage appears to me to be—"although we labour for Chriſt, and devote our life to the ſpreading the light of his goſpel amongſt mankind, we yet derive therefrom no worldly gain, but procure whatever may be neceſſary to our ſubſiſtence by the diligence of our hands." And when in the ſame epiſtle, 1 Cor. xv. 10. he declares himſelf to have laboured more abundantly than all the reſt of the apoſtles, περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα; his meaning unqueſtionably is, that he had made more converts to Chriſtianity than they. It would be eaſy to adduce other paſſages, in which by labouring, whether it occur abſolutely or in connection with ſome explanatory addition, is evidently meant not the ordinary inſtruction of the Chriſtians, but the propagating of the goſpel amongſt thoſe who were as yet ignorant of the true religion; but I conceive that the citations which I have already made will be deemed ſufficient. We ſee, therefore,

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ſcarcely poſſible, or rather it is impoſſible, to entertain a doubt, but that this diſtinction between teaching

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fore, that it might not without ſome ſhew of reaſon and authority be contended that by πρεσβυτέρες κοπιῶντας ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ, "the elders who labour in the word and doctrine," are to be underſtood ſuch of the preſbyters as were intent on enlarging the church, and occupied themſelves in converting the Jews and heathens from their errors, and bringing them into the fold of their divine Maſter,—and not thoſe whoſe exertions were limited to the inſtructing and admoniſhing of the members of the church, when aſſembled for the purpoſe of divine worſhip. No one can doubt but that amongſt the elders to whom the care of the churches was committed, there muſt have been many whoſe holy zeal carried them beyond the limits of that particular aſſembly over which they preſided, and urged them to uſe every endeavour for the propagation of the goſpel amongſt their benighted neighbours; and nothing could be more natural than for ſuch to be pointed out as more eſpecially deſerving of an higher reward, and worthy to be held in greater eſteem than the reſt. This interpretation appears to me to receive no inconſiderable confirmation, when I compare the paſſage in queſtion with another of a ſimilar nature in St. Paul's epiſtle to the Theſſalonians: Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς; ἀδελφοὶ εἰδέναι τοὺς κοπιῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ, καὶ νουθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς;, "and we beſeech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admoniſh you." 1 Theſſ. v. 12. Now nothing, I think, can be more manifeſt than that the apoſtle, in this place, alludes to the maintaining and honouring of the preſbyters or elders. I have not the leaſt idea of any one's denying it. Apparently he diſtinguiſhes them into three claſſes, *viz.* 1. κοπιῶντας, thoſe who laboured; 2. προϊσταμένους, thoſe who ruled or preſided; and, 3. νουθετοῦντας, thoſe who taught or admoniſhed. But it is not ſo much to this point that I would wiſh to direct the reader's attention, as to the circumſtance that τὸν κοπον, "the labour" of the miniſters of the church is here clearly ſpoken of by the apoſtle as a thing diſtinct from νουθεσία, "admonition or exhortation:" from whence it may naturally be inferred that the preſbyters who are ſaid by him to labour were different from thoſe who inſtructed the members of the church, when aſſembled, in the nature of their faith and duties, or, in other words, "admoniſhed them." The verb κοπιάω is here put abſolutely;

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teaching and ruling preſbyters was after a ſhort time laid aſide, and none ſubſequently elected to that office but ſuch as were qualified to admoniſh and inſtruct the brethren. The number of theſe elders was not the ſame in every place, but accommodated to the circumſtances and extent of the church. The endowments which it was requiſite that a preſbyter ſhould poſſeſs, and the virtues which ought to adorn his character, are particularly pointed out by St. Paul in 1 Tim. iii. 1. and Tit. i. 5.; and it cannot be queſtioned that his injunctions on this ſubject were ſtrictly adhered to, in thoſe early golden days of the church, when every thing belonging to it was characterized by an ingenuous and beautiful ſimplicity. It muſt, however, I conceive, be ſo obvious to every one as ſcarcely to need pointing out, that in the requiſite qualifications thus ſpecified by the apoſtle, there are ſeveral things which apply excluſively to thoſe times, when Chriſtianity had ſcarcely eſtabliſhed a footing for

abſolutely; but there can be no doubt but that we ought to underſtand the words ἐν λόγῳ καὶ διδασκαλίᾳ, as in 1 Tim. v. 17. or ἐν κυρίῳ, as in Rom. xvi. 12. as annexed to it. Indeed it does not appear to be altogether neceſſary that we ſhould call in any further aid than is afforded by the paſſage itſelf, for determining the force of the word in this place: for probably the generality of people will be diſpoſed to conſider the words ἐν Κυρίῳ as common to all the three members of the ſentence, and as having, notwithſtanding their immediate connection with προϊσταμένους, a reference likewiſe to the terms ὑποτασσομένους and νουθετοῦντας. In my opinion, therefore, the apoſtle, in the paſſage before us, is to be underſtood as addreſſing the Theſſalonians thus: "I earneſtly intreat you to take care that your preſbyters be liberally ſupplied with every neceſſary; firſt of all, thoſe who labour among you with all their might to propagate the faith of Chriſt, and augment his flock;—and, in the next place, thoſe who govern the church, and admoniſh and inſtruct you by their voice and example."

itſelf

itſelf in the world, and the ſtate of manners was far different from what it is at the preſent day. CENT. I.

XXXIX. That the preſbyters of the primitive church of Jeruſalem were elected by the ſuffrages of the people cannot, I think, well be doubted of by any one who ſhall have duly conſidered the prudence and moderation diſcovered by the apoſtles, in filling up the vacancy in their own number, and in appointing curators or guardians for the poor. This power of appointing their elders, continued to be exerciſed by the members of the church at large, as long as primitive manners were retained entire, and thoſe who ruled over the churches did not conceive themſelves at liberty to introduce any deviation from the apoſtolic model [*a*]. The form of proceeding in this matter was unqueſtionably the ſame in the firſt age as we find it to have been in the ſecond and third centuries. When at any time the ſtate of the church required that a new preſbyter ſhould be appointed, the collective body of elders recommended to the aſſembly of the people one or more perſons, (in general ſelected from amongſt the deacons,) as fit to fill that office. To this recommendation the people were conſtrained to pay no further reſpect than it might appear to them to deſerve [*b*]. Indeed it is placed beyond a doubt, Election of the preſbyters, their ſtipends, &c.

[*a*] What St. Paul ſays, Tit. i. 5. of his having left Titus in Crete, for the purpoſe of ordaining preſbyters in the churches there, militates in no reſpect againſt the above ſtatement. In executing the commiſſion with which he was entruſted, Titus might, and doubtleſs did, conſult the wiſhes of the people, and not appoint any to the office of preſbyter but ſuch as he found were approved of by them.

[*b*] It is plain from hence, that what we term the right of preſentation, (except in as far as it is at preſent compulſory,) has nothing in it repugnant to the practice of the church

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Election of the preſbyters, their ſtipends, &c.

a doubt, that the multitude, ſo far from always adopting the candidates propoſed by the preſbyters, were accuſtomed not unfrequently to aſſert the right of judging wholly for themſelves, and to require that this or that particular perſon, whom they held in higher eſteem than the reſt,

church in the earlieſt times. Our Saviour's apoſtles, we ſee, exerciſed a right of this kind, when it became neceſſary to fill up the vacancy in their own number, occaſioned by the fall of Judas; and in after-ages, until the right of patronage, as it is called, found its way into the church, a ſimilar right of preſentation was uniformly recogniſed as belonging to the biſhops and collective bodies of preſbyters. Nor will any one, it is preſumed, take exception to this, who ſhall reflect that, the generality of the individuals conſtituting the church of Chriſt are of neceſſity incapable of eſtimating the extent of a man's endowments, or of judging how far one may excel another in the qualifications requiſite for teaching, and are apt rather to follow the bent of their own wayward humours and prejudices than to liſten to the voice of reaſon and prudence; and how expedient and requiſite, therefore, it is, that when a biſhop or preſbyter is about to be elected, certain perſons of diſcretion and experience ſhould be commiſſioned to point out to the multitude one or more fit objects for their choice. I paſs over the extreme difficulty which is for the moſt part experienced, even in ſmall aſſemblies, in conducting an election with any degree of harmony or order, where there are a number of rival candidates for a vacant place, unleſs there be ſome one appointed to officiate as ſuperintendant or moderator. For the multitude, if left entirely to itſelf on ſuch an occaſion, is ſure to have its proceedings diſtracted by a conflict of diſcordant intereſts and opinions. It muſt be obſerved, however, that prior to the age of Conſtantine the Great, notwithſtanding this right of preſentation, the moſt perfect freedom of choice ſtill reſided with the people; the multitude being at liberty to reject the perſons thus recommended to them, without aſſigning any reaſon for their ſo doing, and either to fix on others for themſelves, or elſe demand that freſh candidates ſhould be propoſed to them by the biſhop or preſbyters. In this reſpect the right of preſentation, as it is now exerciſed, differs very materially from that which was recognized in the primitive church.

ſhould

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should be advanced to the office of an elder. When the voice of the multitude, in the election of any one to the sacred ministry, was unanimous, it was considered in the light of a divine call. In compliance with the express commands of our Lord himself and his apostles, these teachers and ministers of the church were, from the first, maintained and supplied with every necessary by the people for whose edification they laboured [c]; a certain portion of the voluntary offerings, or oblations as they were termed, being allotted to their use. It will easily be conceived that whilst the churches were but small, and composed chiefly of persons of the lower or middling classes, the provision thus made for the support of the presbyters and deacons could not be very considerable.

Election of the presbyters, their stipends, &c.

XL. By far the greater part of those who embraced the Christian religion in this its infancy being of mean extraction, and wholly illiterate, it could not otherwise happen but that a great scarcity should be experienced in the churches of persons possessing the qualifications requisite for initiating the ignorant, and communicating instruction to them with a due degree of readiness and skill. It pleased God, therefore, to raise up in every direction certain individuals, and, by irradiating their minds with a more than ordinary measure of his holy Spirit, to render them fit instruments for making known his words to the people, and imparting instruction to them, in their public assemblies, on matters relating to religion. These are they who, in the writings of

The prophets.

[c] 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. 1 Tim. v. 17. Gal. vi. 6. 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

the

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the New Teſtament, are ſtyled prophets [*d*]. Whoever profeſſed himſelf to be under the influence of a divine inſpiration, and claimed attention as an extraordinary interpreter of the will of God, had permiſſion granted him to ſpeak in public: for, without hearing him, it was impoſſible for any one to ſay whether his pretenſions to inſpiration were or were not well founded. When once he had ſpoken, however, all uncertainty with regard to his commiſſion was at an end; for there were in the churches perſons inſtructed of God, who could diſcern by infallible ſigns between a true prophet and one who falſely

[*d*] It appears to me that the function of theſe prophets, as they are ſtyled, is too much narrowed by thoſe who would have us believe that they were merely interpreters of the ſacred writings, and more eſpecially of the prophecies delivered under the old covenant. It was a common thing, I grant, for theſe prophets to adduce proofs of the truth and divine original of the Chriſtian religion from the inſpired writers of the Old Teſtament. I am ready alſo to grant that not unfrequently particular paſſages in the Old Teſtament, the genuine ſenſe of which had either eſcaped the Jewiſh doctors, or been obſcured by them, were, through the ſagacity of theſe prophets, illuſtrated and placed in a proper point of view. But notwithſtanding this, I am perſuaded that whoever ſhall with calmneſs and deliberation examine and compare with each other the different paſſages in the New Teſtament, in which mention is made of theſe prophets, cannot fail to perceive that they did not confine themſelves merely to the interpretation of the Scriptures. On this ſubject I have already given my ſentiments to the public at ſome length, in a particular tract *de illis, qui Prophetæ vocantur in novo Fœdere*, which is to be found in the ſecond volume of my *Diſſertationes ad Hiſtoriam Eccleſiaſtic. pertinentes*. We have no poſitive teſtimony that there were prophets in all the early churches; but it appears extremely probable that ſuch was the caſe, ſince St. Paul, in enumerating the miniſters of the church appointed by God himſelf, aſſigns the ſecond place to the prophets. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Epheſ. iv. 11.

pretended

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pretended to that character. The apoſtles alſo had left on record certain marks, by which one ſpecially commiſſioned from above might clearly be diſtinguiſhed from an impoſtor [*e*]. This order of prophets ceaſed in the church, when the reaſons which gave birth to it no longer exiſted. For when the affairs of the church took a proſperous turn, and regular ſchools or ſeminaries were inſtituted, in which thoſe who were deſigned for the ſacred miniſtry received an education ſuitable to the office, it conſequently became unneceſſary that God ſhould any longer continue to inſtruct the people by the mouths of theſe extraordinary miniſters or prophets [*f*].

XLI. Whilſt

[*e*] 1 Cor. xii. 2, 3. xiv. 29. 1 John, iv. 1.

[*f*] There can be no doubt but that, from almoſt the very firſt riſe of Chriſtianity, it was the practice for certain of the youth, in whom ſuch a ſtrength of genius and capacity manifeſted itſelf as to afford a hope of their becoming profitable ſervants in the cauſe of religion, to be ſet apart for the ſacred miniſtry, and for the preſbyters and biſhops to ſupply them with the requiſite preparatory inſtruction, and form them by their precepts and advice for that ſolemn office. On this ſubject St. Paul, in the latter of his epiſtles to Timothy, ii. 2. expreſſes himſelf in the following terms: καὶ ἃ ἤκουσας παρ' ἐμοῦ διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων, ταῦτα παράθου πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οἵτινες ἱκανοὶ ἔσονται καὶ ἑτέρους διδάξαι; "and the things that thou haſt heard of me among many witneſſes, the ſame commit thou to faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others alſo." The apoſtle here, we ſee, directs Timothy, in the firſt place, to ſelect from amongſt the members of the church a certain number of men, who might appear to him to poſſeſs the talents requiſite for conveying inſtruction to others, and who were perſons of tried and approved faith. For it will not admit of a doubt that by the πιστοὶ ἄνθρωποι, "faithful men," here alluded to, we ought to underſtand not merely believers, or thoſe holding the faith, but perſons of approved and eſtabliſhed faith, to whom things of the higheſt moment might be entruſted without danger or apprehenſion. Secondly, to the perſons thus ſelected he was to communicate and expound that diſ-

 cipline,

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XLI. Whilſt the Chriſtian aſſemblies or churches were but ſmall, two, three, or four preſbyters

cipline, in which he himſelf had been inſtructed by St. Paul before many witneſſes. Now it is evident that St. Paul could not by this mean that they were to be taught the mere elements or rudiments of the Chriſtian religion; for with theſe every one profeſſing Chriſtianity was of courſe brought acquainted; and doubtleſs, therefore, thoſe whom the apoſtle in this place directs Timothy to inſtruct, muſt have known and been thoroughly verſed in them long before. The diſcipline, then, which Timothy had received from St. Paul, and which he was thus to become the inſtrument of communicating to others, was without queſtion that more full and perfect knowledge of divine truth as revealed in the goſpel of Chriſt, which it was fitting that every one who was advanced to the office of a maſter or teacher amongſt the brethren ſhould poſſeſs, together with a due degree of inſtruction as to the moſt ſkilful and ready method of imparting to the multitude a proper rule of faith, and correct principles of moral action. But what is this, I would aſk, but to direct Timothy to inſtitute a ſchool or ſeminary for the education of future preſbyters and teachers for the church, and to cauſe a certain number of perſons of talents and virtue to be trained up therein, under a courſe of diſcipline ſimilar to that which he himſelf had received at the hands of St. Paul? It may moreover be inferred from theſe words, that the apoſtle had perſonally diſcharged the ſame office which he thus impoſes on Timothy, and applied himſelf to the properly educating of future teachers and miniſters for the church: for it appears by them that he had not been the tutor of Timothy only, but that his inſtructions to this his favourite diſciple had been imparted διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων, "before many witneſſes;" διὰ having, in this place, unqueſtionably the force of the prepoſition ἐνώπιον. To determine, indeed, whom we ought to underſtand by the perſons thus termed "witneſſes," has occaſioned no little ſtir amongſt the commentators. According to ſome, we ſhould connect them with the following word παράθου, and conſider St. Paul as ſaying, διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων παράθου, "tranſmit by many witneſſes." Others would have us underſtand by theſe witneſſes, the preſbyters who ordained Timothy to the ſacred miniſtry by the laying on of hands, 1 Tim. iv. 14.; and conceive that, immediately previous to ſuch ordination, St. Paul had, in the preſence

preſbyters were found amply ſufficient to labour for the welfare, and regulate the concerns of each: and over a few men like theſe, inflamed as they were with the ſincereſt piety towards

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and hearing of theſe preſbyters, recapitulated and again inculcated on the mind of his adopted ſon in the faith the chief or leading articles of the Chriſtian religion: whilſt others, again, imagine that the perſons here alluded to, were witneſſes of the life, actions, and miracles of our Lord. But of theſe and ſome other conjectures on the ſubject, which it is needleſs to enumerate, there is not one but what is encumbered with conſiderable difficulties. A much more natural way of reſolving the point, as it appears to me, is by ſuppoſing that St. Paul had under him, in a ſort of ſeminary or ſchool which he had inſtituted for the purpoſe of properly educating preſbyters and teachers, ſeveral other diſciples or pupils beſides Timothy; and that the witneſſes here ſpoken of, before whom Timothy had been inſtructed, were his fellow-ſtudents, perſons deſtined like him for the miniſtry, and partakers together with him of the benefits that were to be derived from the apoſtle's tuition. It is highly credible, I may ſay indeed it is more than credible, that not St. Paul alone, but alſo all the other apoſtles of our Lord applied themſelves to the properly inſtructing of certain ſelect perſons, ſo as to render them fit to be entruſted with the care and government of the churches; and, conſequently, that the firſt Chriſtian teachers were brought up and formed in ſchools or ſeminaries immediately under their eye. Beſides other references which might be given, it appears from Irenæus *adverſ. Hæreſes*, lib. ii. cap. xxii. p. 148. ed. Maſſuet. that St. John employed himſelf at Epheſus, where he ſpent the latter part of his life, in qualifying youth for the ſacred miniſtry. And the ſame author, as quoted by Euſebius, *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. v. cap. xx. p. 188. repreſents Polycarp, the celebrated biſhop of Smyrna, as having laboured in the ſame way. That the example of theſe illuſtrious characters was in this reſpect followed by the biſhops in general, will ſcarcely admit of a doubt. To this origin, in my opinion, are to be referred thoſe ſeminaries termed "epiſcopal ſchools," which we find attached to the principal churches, and in which youth deſigned for the miniſtry went through a proper courſe of preparatory inſtruction and diſcipline under the biſhop himſelf, or ſome preſbyter of his appointment.

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God, and receiving but very moderate ſtipends, it was not required that any one ſhould be appointed to preſide in the capacity of a ruler or ſuperintendant. But as the congregations of Chriſtians became every day larger and larger, a proportionate gradual increaſe in the number of the preſbyters and miniſters of neceſſity took place; and as the rights and power of all were the ſame, it was ſoon found impoſſible, under the circumſtances of that age, when every church was left to the care of itſelf, for any thing like a general harmony to be maintained amongſt them, or for the various neceſſities of the multitude to be regularly and ſatisfactorily provided for, without ſome one to preſide and exert a controuling influence. Such being the caſe, the churches adopted the practice of ſelecting, and placing at the head of the council of preſbyters, ſome one man of eminent wiſdom and prudence, whoſe peculiar duty it ſhould be to allot to his colleagues their ſeveral taſks, and by his advice, and every other mode of aſſiſtance, to prevent as far as in him lay the intereſts of the aſſembly, over which he was thus appointed to preſide, from experiencing any kind of detriment or injury [g]. The

[g] This ſtatement reſpecting the origin of the order of biſhops muſt, I am perſuaded, obtain the aſſent of every one who knows what human nature is, and ſhall reflect on the ſituation of things in that early age, and alſo on the jealouſies, diſſenſions, and various other embarraſſing evils, that are incident to collective bodies of individuals who are all on a footing of equality. That the firſt churches had no biſhops may, I think, very clearly be proved from the writings of the New Teſtament.—I do not mean from the circumſtance to which ſo much weight is by many attributed, *viz.* that it is not unuſual to find therein the term biſhop applied to preſbyters in general: for thoſe who take the oppoſite ſide of the queſtion will ſay in reply, that perſons

The perſon thus advanced to the preſidency, was at firſt diſtinguiſhed by the title of "the angel" of

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perſons inveſted with the prelacy were at firſt diſtinguiſhed by another name; but that, after ſome time, the term biſhop ceaſed to be applied to preſbyters of the common order, and was appropriated excluſively to the chief or preſiding preſbyters. But the evidence which, as I have ſtated above, I deem concluſive as to this point is this,—that neither in the Acts of the Apoſtles, nor in St. Paul's epiſtles, although in both expreſs mention is frequently made of preſbyters and deacons, do we find the leaſt notice taken of any church having been ſubject to the authority or rule of a ſingle man. It appears to me, however, equally certain that the churches did not long continue under the care and management of councils of preſbyters, amongſt whom there was no diſtinction of rank; but that in the more conſiderable ones at leaſt, if not in the others, it came, even during the life-time of the apoſtles, and with their approbation, to be the practice for ſome one man more eminent than the reſt to be inveſted with the preſidency or chief direction. And in ſupport of this opinion, we are ſupplied with an argument of ſuch ſtrength in thoſe "angels," to whom St. John addreſſed the epiſtles, which, by the command of our Saviour himſelf, he ſent to the ſeven churches of Aſia, Rev. ii. iii. as the preſbyterians, as they are termed, let them labour and ſtrive what they may, will never be able to overcome. It muſt be evident to every one, even on a curſory peruſal of the epiſtles to which we refer, that thoſe who are therein termed "angels" were perſons poſſeſſing ſuch a degree of authority in their reſpective churches, as enabled them to mark with merited diſgrace whatever might appear to be deſerving of reprehenſion, and alſo to give due countenance and encouragement to every thing that was virtuous and commendable. But even ſuppoſing that we were to wave the advantage that is to be derived from this argument in eſtabliſhing the antiquity of the epiſcopal character, it appears to me that the bare conſideration alone of the ſtate of the church in its infancy, muſt be ſufficient to convince any rational unprejudiced perſon, that the order of biſhops could not have originated at a period conſiderably more recent than that which gave birth to Chriſtianity itſelf. For it is impoſſible for any one who is acquainted with what human nature is, and knows how things were circumſtanced in the firſt ages, to believe that a proper harmony could

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could be maintained amongſt the preſbyters, or that the aſſemblies of the church could be convened and regulated, or any factions or diſturbances that might ariſe amongſt the people be repreſſed and compoſed, or that many other things which might be enumerated could be accompliſhed with any degree of promptitude, regularity, and eaſe, without ſome one being appointed to act in the capacity of moderator or preſident. If I figure to myſelf an aſſembly compoſed of merely a moderate number of people,—ſay, for inſtance, a hundred,—and ſuppoſe ſuch aſſembly to be placed under the care of one or two excellent perſons, poſſeſſing hearts filled with love towards God and man, and entirely devoid of ambition and cupidity of wealth, I can very well conceive that, owing to the paucity and ſincere piety of the aſſembly itſelf, as well as of thoſe entruſted with the care and management of its concerns, it might be poſſible for its affairs to be conducted with the greateſt regularity, and for its proceedings not to be diſgraced by any thing like confuſion or party ſpirit. But when I enlarge upon this idea, and preſent to my mind's eye a multitude conſiſting of perhaps four or five hundred perſons,—a multitude, too, not receiving laws from a ſuperior, but legiſlating entirely for itſelf, and claſſed or diſtributed under perhaps ten different preſbyters or teachers, all on a footing of the moſt perfect equality, the caſe becomes entirely altered, and I ſhould deem it no leſs eſſential for ſuch a multitude to have ſome individual leader or guide aſſigned to it, than for a legion of ſoldiers to have its proper commander or tribune.

[*b*] The title of "angel" is applied by our Lord himſelf to the preſidents of the ſeven churches of Aſia, Rev. ii. iii.; and hence it may fairly be inferred that perſons of that deſcription were uſually ſtyled ſo in the firſt century: for it is not to be imagined that our Saviour addreſſed thoſe chiefs of their churches by a new and unaccuſtomed title. As to what has been urged by ſeveral learned perſons, reſpecting the peculiar ſignificance and force of this appellation, it appears to me for the moſt part as rather ſpeculative and curious than well founded and important. For ſince the term ἄγγελος ſignifies in general a legate, or perſon accredited

church, or at what preciſe period, this arrangement was firſt introduced, remains nowhere on record. It appears to me, however, that there are the ſtrongeſt reaſons for believing that the church of Jeruſalem, which in point of numbers exceeded every other, took the lead in this reſpect; and that her example was gradually copied after by the reſt in ſucceſſion, according as their increaſe in ſize, or their ſituation in other reſpects, might ſuggeſt the propriety of their doing ſo [*i*].

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XLII. That

credited either of God or man, and thoſe preſidents of the churches were regarded as being in an eſpecial degree commiſſioned of God, it, in my opinion, requires no very great depth of reſearch to account for their being ſtyled angels, at a time when, in conformity to the practice of the apoſtles themſelves, it was cuſtomary for the title of biſhop to be applied to preſbyters in general, and conſequently ſome other appellation was found neceſſary, in order to diſtinguiſh the chief preſbyters from thoſe of the ordinary rank. A more juſt or appropriate title than this could ſcarcely have been fixed on. As the term, however, could not be deemed altogether free from ambiguity, and might perhaps be found to give occaſion for ſome aſpiring individuals to over-rate their own conſequence, and fancy themſelves nearly on a level with thoſe who are in the ſtrict ſenſe of the word ſtyled angels, (for even the mereſt trifles are ſufficient to ſupply men with arguments for vanity and pride,) it was probably thought better to exchange this title for one more definitive and humble, and to ſubſtitute for it that very one which had previouſly been common to the preſbyters at large; ſo that theſe preſidents might thereby be conſtantly reminded that they were merely placed at the head of a family of brethren, and that their function differed not in its nature from that wherewith all the elders were at the firſt inveſted. It appears to me, therefore, that in the appellation ἄγγελος τῆς ἐκκλησίας, the word θεῷ is to be ſupplied; and that the title ought to be underſtood as running thus, Ἄγγελος τῷ θεῷ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, *i. e.* a perſon eſpecially commiſſioned of God, or one who occupies the ſtation of a divine legate in the church.

[*i*] As the early churches are well known to have taken all their inſtitutions and regulations from the model exhibited

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hibited to them by the church of Jeruſalem, it appears to me that ſcarcely a doubt can be entertained of their having been alſo indebted to this laſt-mentioned venerable aſſembly for the example of appointing ſome one man to preſide over the preſbyters and general intereſts of each individual church, and that the firſt inſtance of any one's being inveſted with the epiſcopal office occurred in that city. This much at leaſt is certain, that no church whatever can be proved to have had a biſhop prior to that of Jeruſalem; and that none of the ancient accounts and notices of biſhops, which are to be met with in Euſebius and other authors, do aſcend ſo high as thoſe of Jeruſalem. All ancient authorities, from the ſecond century downwards, concur in repreſenting James the Younger, the brother of our Lord after the fleſh, as the firſt biſhop of the church of Jeruſalem, having been ſo created by the apoſtles themſelves. Vid. *Acta functor. Mens. Maii*; tom. i. p. 23. Tillemont, *Memoires pour ſervir a l'Hiſtoire de l'Egliſe*, tom. i. p. 1008, et ſeq. Now if this were as truly as it is uniformly reported, it would at once determine the point which we have under conſideration, ſince it muſt cloſe the door againſt all doubt as to the quarter in which epiſcopacy originated. But I rather ſuſpect that theſe ancient writers might incautiouſly be led to form their judgment of the ſtate of things in the firſt century from the maxims and practice of their own times, and finding that, after the departure of the other apoſtles on their reſpective miſſions, the chief regulation and ſuperintendance of the church at Jeruſalem reſted with James, they without further reaſon concluded that he muſt have been appointed the biſhop of that church. It appears indeed, from the writings of the New Teſtament, that, after the departure of the other apoſtles on their travels, the chief authority in the church of Jeruſalem was poſſeſſed by James. For St. Paul, when he came to that city for the laſt time, immediately repaired to this apoſtle; and James appears to have thereupon convened an aſſembly of the preſbyters at his houſe, where Paul laid before them an account of the extent and ſucceſs of his labours in the cauſe of his divine Maſter. Acts, xxi. 19, 20. No one reading this can, I ſhould think, entertain a doubt of James's having been, at that time, inveſted with the chief ſuperintendance and government of the church of Jeruſalem; and that not only the aſſemblies of the preſbyters, but alſo thoſe general

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degree of power which placed them much above the presbyters, will not be disputed by any unprejudiced

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ones of the whole church, in which, as is clear from verse 22, was lodged the supreme power as to all matters of a sacred nature, were convened by his appointment. But it is to be observed that this authority was no more than must have devolved on James of course, in his apostolic character, in consequence of all the other apostles having quitted Jerusalem; and that therefore this testimony of St. Luke is by no means to be considered as conclusive evidence of his having been appointed to the office of bishop. Were we to admit of such kind of reasoning as this,—the government of the church of Jerusalem was vested in James, therefore he was its bishop,—I do not see on what grounds we could refuse our assent, should it be asserted that all the twelve apostles were bishops of that church, for it was at one time equally under their government. But not to enlarge unnecessarily.—The function of an apostle differed widely from that of a bishop; and I therefore do not think that James, who was an apostle, was ever appointed to or discharged the episcopal office at Jerusalem. The government of the church in that city, it rather appears to me, was placed in the hands of its presbyters, but so as that nothing of moment could be done without the advice and authority of James; the same sort of respectful deference being paid to his will as had formerly been manifested for that of the apostles at large. But although we deem those ancient writers to have committed an error, in pronouncing James to have been the first bishop of Jerusalem, it may without much difficulty be demonstrated that the church of that city had a bishop sooner than any of the rest, and consequently that the episcopal dignity must have taken its rise there. The church of Jerusalem, at the time of that city's being taken and finally laid waste by the emperor Hadrian, towards the middle of the second century, (about the year of our Lord 137 or 138,) had had fourteen bishops, without our reckoning James as one of them. A list of their names is given us by Eusebius, (*Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. v. p. 117.) who derived his information in this respect, not from any vague report or tradition, but from certain ancient written documents which had come under his own immediate inspection: ἐξ ἐγγράφων. At that period, according to the same historian, the church of Rome had had no more than seven bishops, and that of Alexandria only five. He likewise

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prejudiced or impartial perſon: but we are not poſſeſſed of ſufficient information on the ſubject, to enable us to ſtate with exact preciſion the extent to which thoſe rights and that power reached during the firſt century. It is certain, however, that it would be forming a very erroneous judg-

likewiſe repreſents (*Hiſt. Eccleſ.* lib. iv. cap. xx. p. 141.) the church of Antioch as having, even ſo late as in the reign of the emperor Marcus Antoninus, been under the government of merely its ſixth biſhop. The number, then, of biſhops who had filled the ſee of Jeruſalem having, in the time of Hadrian, reached to more than double that of the prelates of any other of the more conſiderable churches, it appears to me that we are amply juſtified in concluding that the church of that city placed itſelf under a biſhop long before either of the reſt, and that the other churches were ſucceſſively induced to follow her example. Euſebius indeed ſays, that he had not been able to aſcertain exactly how many years each of theſe biſhops had held the ſee; but that, according to common report, they all preſided but for a ſhort time. But this in no reſpect militates againſt the above concluſion. If we aſſign, as ſurely we may at the leaſt, to each of theſe biſhops three years, we ſhall find it give us ſomewhat above forty years as the term of their government altogether. Should we, however, be of opinion that the church of Jeruſalem (which, from its amplitude, and the great number of its preſbyters, muſt have felt in a very eminent and preſſing degree the neceſſity of having a chief ruler or preſident) was, as is moſt probable, induced, immediately on the martyrdom of James the Juſt, to place itſelf under the ſuperintendance and care of a biſhop, we may, in ſuch caſe, allow a much longer period to the government of the fourteen prelates mentioned by Euſebius: for it has been reſolved by the learned, apparently on very ſufficient grounds, that James was put to death in the year of our Lord 62, which was more than ſeventy years prior to the final overthrow of Jeruſalem by Hadrian. But in whatever way our calculations as to this point may be made, it will be equally placed beyond diſpute that the church of Jeruſalem had over it a biſhop long enough before the cloſe of the firſt century after Chriſt; and this being eſtabliſhed, it will ſcarcely, I had almoſt ſaid it cannot, be denied that the epiſcopal dignity muſt have originated in and paſſed to the other churches from that of Jeruſalem.

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ment, were we to eſtimate the power, the revenue, the privileges, and rights of the firſt biſhops, from the rank, affluence, and authority attached to the epiſcopal character in the preſent day. A primitive biſhop was, as it ſhould ſeem, none other than the chief or principal miniſter of an individual church, which, at the period of which we are ſpeaking, was ſeldom ſo numerous but that it could be aſſembled under one roof. He taught the people, adminiſtered what are termed the ſacraments, and ſupplied the ailing and the indigent with comfort and relief. With regard to the performance of ſuch duties as it was impoſſible for him to fulfil or attend to in perſon, he availed himſelf of the aſſiſtance of the preſbyters. Aſſociating, likewiſe, theſe preſbyters with him in council, he inquired into and determined any diſputes or differences that might ſubſiſt amongſt the members of his flock, and alſo looked round and conſulted with them as to any meaſures which the welfare and proſperity of the church appeared to require. Whatever arrangements might be deemed eligible, were propoſed by him to the people for their adoption, in a general aſſembly. In fine, a primitive biſhop could neither determine nor enact any thing of himſelf, but was bound to conform to and carry into effect whatever might be reſolved on by the preſbyters and the people [*k*]. The epiſcopal dignity would not be much coveted, I rather think, on ſuch terms, by many of thoſe who, under the preſent ſtate of things, intereſt

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[*k*] All that we have thus ſtated is clearly to be proved from documents of the firſt ages. Of this the reader may ſatisfy himſelf, by conſulting, amongſt other works, Bingham's *Origines Eccleſiaſticæ*, and Beveridge's *Codex Canonum primitivæ Eccleſiæ*.

themſelves

CENT. I. themſelves very warmly on behalf of biſhops and their authority. Of the emoluments attached to this office, which, it may be obſerved, was one of no ſmall labour and peril, I deem it unneceſſary for me to ſay any thing: for that they muſt have been extremely ſmall, cannot but be obvious to every one who ſhall conſider that no church had, in thoſe days, any other revenue than what aroſe from the voluntary offerings, or oblations as they were termed, of the people, by far the greater part of whom were perſons of very moderate or ſlender means; and that out of theſe offerings, in addition to the biſhop, proviſion was to be made for the preſbyters, the deacons, and the indigent brethren.

Rural biſhops and dioceſes.

XLIII. It was not long, however, before circumſtances became ſo changed, as to produce a conſiderable extenſion and enlargement of the limits, within which the epiſcopal government and authority had been at firſt confined. For the biſhops who preſided in the cities, were accuſtomed to ſend out into the neighbouring towns and country adjacent certain of their preſbyters, for the purpoſe of making converts, and eſtabliſhing churches therein; and it being of courſe deemed but fair and proper that the rural or village congregations, which were drawn together in this way, ſhould continue under the guardianſhip and authority of the prelate by whoſe counſel and exertion they had been firſt brought to a knowledge of Chriſt and his word, the epiſcopal ſees gradually expanded into eccleſiaſtical provinces of varied extent, ſome greater, ſome leſs, to which the Greeks in after-times gave the denomination of dioceſes. Thoſe to whom the inſtruction and management of theſe ſurrounding country churches were committed

by the dioceſan were termed chorepiſcopi, *i. e.* τῆς χώρας ἐπισκοποὶ, "rural biſhops." Perſons of this deſcription are doubtleſs to be conſidered as having held a middle rank between the biſhops and the preſbyters: for to place them on a level with the former is impoſſible, ſince they were ſubject to their dioceſan; but, at the ſame time, it is manifeſt that they were ſuperior in rank to preſbyters, inaſmuch as they were not accuſtomed to look up to the biſhop for orders or direction, but were inveſted with conſtant authority to teach, and in other reſpects to exerciſe the epiſcopal functions [*l*]. CENT. I.

XLIV. In addition to theſe its governors and teachers, the church had ever belonging to it, even from its very firſt riſe, a claſs of miniſters, compoſed of perſons of either ſex, and who were termed deacons and deaconeſſes. Their office was to diſtribute the alms to the neceſſitous; to Deacons and deaconeſſes.

[*l*] The reader will find this ſubject very copiouſly treated of in the following (amongſt other) works: Morin. *de ſacris Eccleſ. Ordinationibus*, part i. exerc. iv. p. 10, et ſeq.; Blondell. *de Epiſcopis et Preſbyteris*, ſect. iii. p. 93. 120, et ſeq.; Bevereg. *in Pandect. Canonum ad Canon.* xiii. *Concilii Arcyrani*, tom. ii. p. 176.; Zeigler. *de Epiſcopis*, lib. i. cap. xiii. p. 105, et ſeq.; Pet. de Marc. *de Concordia Sacerdotii et Imperii*, lib. ii. cap. xiii. part xiv. p. 159, et ſeq.; Boehmer. *Adnotat. ad illum*, p. 62, 63.; Thomaſſin. *Diſciplina Eccleſ. vet. et nov.* part i. lib. ii. cap. i. p. 215.; the learned authors of which are divided in opinion as to whether the "chorepiſcopi" belonged to the epiſcopal order, or to that of preſbyters. But it appears to me, that whoever ſhall attentively conſider what has been handed down to us reſpecting theſe "rural biſhops," muſt readily perceive that they cannot with propriety be ranked under either of thoſe orders. In fact, I conceive that the queſtion would never have been agitated amongſt men of erudition, had it not been for a preconceived notion, too haſtily taken up by them, that all the miniſters of the primitive church were to be claſſed under one or other of the three orders of biſhops, preſbyters, or deacons.

carry

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carry the orders or meſſages of the elders, wherever neceſſary; and to perform various other duties, ſome of which related merely to the ſolemn aſſemblies that were held at ſtated intervals, whilſt others were of a general nature. That the greateſt caution and prudence were, in in the firſt ages, deemed proper to be obſerved in the choice of theſe miniſters, appears plainly from St. Paul's directions on the ſubject. 1 Tim. iii. 8. et ſeq. From what is afterwards ſaid by the apoſtle, at verſe 13. of the ſame chapter, learned men have been led to conclude, and apparently with much reaſon, that thoſe who had given unequivocal proof of their faith and probity in the capacity of deacons were, after a while, elected into the order of preſbyters. The deaconeſſes were widows of irreproachable character and mature age. In the oriental countries, where, as is well known, men are not permitted to have acceſs to the women, the aſſiſtance of females like theſe muſt have been found of eſſential importance: for, through their miniſtry, the principles of the Chriſtian religion could be diffuſed amongſt the ſofter ſex, and various things be accompliſhed in relation to the Chriſtian ſiſterhood, which, in a region teeming with ſuſpicion and jealouſy, could in no wiſe have been conſigned to or undertaken by men [*m*].

XLV. From

[*m*] The origin of the order of deacons is, in my opinion, unqueſtionably to be referred back to the primitive church of Jeruſalem; but the reader will have perceived, from what I have above remarked on the ſubject, that I do not agree with the majority of writers in conſidering it as having taken its riſe in the appointment of the ſeven Greeks ſpoken of in the Acts of the Apoſtles *. For that there muſt have been miniſters who diſcharged the functions of deacons in

* Vid. ſupr. § xxxvii. note [*w*] p. 203.

XLV. From these particulars we may collect a general idea of what was the form and constitution

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the assembly of the Christians of that city, prior to such appointment, will not with me admit of a doubt: since, not again to bring forward other reasons, it is evident that the business of the church could by no means have been properly conducted, without the assistance of persons acting in that capacity. The more attention, likewise, that I bestow on those "young men," who appear to have been in waiting on the apostles, and committed the bodies of Ananias and his wife to the earth, the more am I convinced that they were in fact none other than deacons. The seven men subsequently appointed I conceive to have been public ministers, differing in no respect from those whom, for the sake of distinction, we will term original deacons, except only that their sphere of duty was limited to that part of the church which was composed of foreigners. Now if this opinion be correct, as it really appears to me to be, there is at once an end of the notion entertained by some, that the deacons of after-ages differed from those of the primitive times; for that it was the office of the original or primitive ones to take care of the poor, but that those of after-times had duties of a very different nature assigned to them by the bishops. To me it seems clear that no such alteration took place in the functions of the deacons, but that, from the first, it was their duty to render themselves serviceable in all things which might be required of them by the situation and circumstances of the church at that time. Whether or not there were any such characters as those of deaconesses known in the church of Jerusalem, is what I have not the means of ascertaining with any degree of certainty. I think, however, it may very well admit of a conjecture, that those widows who were neglected by the Hebrew deacons, (Acts, vi. 1.) might be women acting in the capacity of deaconesses amongst the Greeks. That the handmaids of the churches were in that age termed "widows," in an absolute sense, is manifest beyond a doubt, and may in particular be proved from the words of St. Paul himself, 1 Tim. v. 9, 10. As far as my penetration is able to reach, I can perceive nothing that can be considered as at all opposing itself to this conjecture; but, on the contrary, several things present themselves to notice tending rather to support it. Of the arguments which may be adduced in its favour, I think it is not one of trifling force that the Hebrews,

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tution of thoſe primitive Chriſtian aſſociations, which in the language of Scripture are termed *churches*.

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Hebrews, againſt whom the complaint is made, are not accuſed of having neglected any of the foreign poor beſides the widows. Moſt aſſuredly the Greek Jews who dwelt at Jeruſalem muſt have had other perſons amongſt them who required relief as well as their widows! Then how came it to paſs that their widows alone ſhould have had cauſe given them by the Hebrew deacons to murmur and complain of neglect? Now if by the term widows we here underſtand deaconeſſes, it will be poſſible to aſſign no very unſatisfactory reaſon for this. The number of the Greek converts was undoubtedly not ſo great as that of the Hebrew ones: the duties, therefore, which the "widows" of thoſe Greeks or foreigners had to diſcharge muſt have been executed with leſs labour and inconvenience than fell to the lot of the indigenous matrons, in the performance of their functions. Perceiving, then, that the trouble encountered by the foreign claſs of widows was diſproportionate to that which neceſſarily attached itſelf to the ſervices of the others, and being alſo perhaps ſomewhat influenced by a partiality towards thoſe of their own nation, the Hebrew miniſters, who were entruſted with the diſtribution of the alms, might probably conceive that there could be no impropriety in their granting relief on a more liberal ſcale to the widows of the indigenous Jews than to thoſe of the foreign claſs. But leaving it to others to determine on the validity of this conjecture, I paſs on to the notice of a few things which have ſuggeſted themſelves to me, on a reconſideration of the hiſtory of the controverſy above alluded to between the Jews and the Greeks, as given us by St. Luke. In the opening of his narrative, the ſacred hiſtorian tells us that "there had ariſen a murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews." Being particularly ſtudious of brevity, however, he omits adding ſome things which yet are neceſſary to be underſtood by his readers, in order to their forming a proper judgment of the affair. In the firſt place, then, although no ſuch thing is expreſſed, yet it is evident from the context that we muſt conſider the Greeks as having come to the apoſtles, and complained to them of the ill conduct of the Hebrews. It could not, however, ſurely have been againſt all the Chriſtian converts of the Hebrew race, at that time dwelling in Jeruſalem, that complaint was thus preferred. For no one that is in his ſenſes can believe that the whole body of

Hebrews

churches. Every church was compoſed of three conſtituent parts: 1ſt, Teachers, who were alſo inveſted

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Hebrews ſhould have deliberately concurred in a wiſh to wrong the widows of the foreigners, or have agreed together that leſs relief ſhould be afforded to them than to the others. The complaint there can be no doubt related merely to thoſe indigenous Jews, to whom the relief and care of the poor had been committed by the apoſtles. We muſt alſo conclude that the Greeks, who were the bearers of this accuſation, preferred at the ſame time, on behalf of their church, a requeſt that the apoſtles would take upon themſelves the future diſtribution of the alms, and the adminiſtration of whatever elſe might relate to the poor. For unleſs we conceive this to have been the caſe, it is impoſſible to account for the ſpeech which is ſtated to have been made by the apoſtles to the multitude when aſſembled. Had no ſuch direct application been made to them to take upon themſelves the office, what room could there have been for their ſo formally declining it? Taking it, however, for the fact, that ſuch requeſt was made, as we are certainly well warranted in doing by the words of the apoſtles themſelves, what follows will be found to correſpond in a very ſtriking degree with every thing precedent, and the whole affair is at once rendered clear and intelligible. The addreſs delivered by the apoſtles, on this occaſion, to the general aſſembly of the church, we may ſuppoſe to have ran ſomewhat in this way:—"Brethren, we are given to underſtand by the Greeks, that their widows have not experienced, in point of charitable aſſiſtance, that degree of juſtice which they had a right to expect at the hands of the miniſters of the church; and they have, in conſequence thereof, expreſſed a wiſh that we ourſelves would undertake to ſee that things of this kind ſhould be properly managed for the future. To this, however, we cannot by any means conſent: for were we to comply with the requeſt thus made to us, and take upon ourſelves the buſineſs of adminiſtering relief to the poor, we ſhould inevitably be obliged to neglect the moſt important part of our function, which conſiſts in unfolding the truths of divine revelation, and extending the bounds of the Chriſtian community, or at leaſt ſhould not be able to devote ourſelves to it with that degree of attention and aſſiduity which the will of God requires. The remedy, therefore, which we will, with your conſent, apply to

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to the evil complained of, ſhall be this.—Chooſe ye from amongſt yourſelves ſeven men, on whoſe faith and integrity ye can rely, to ſuperintend this buſineſs, and recommend them to us. From thoſe whom ye may thus point out, as perſons worthy to be entruſted with the guardianſhip and care of the poor, you will not find us in any wiſe diſpoſed to withhold our confidence." For further information with regard to the deacons and deaconeſſes of the primitive church, the reader is referred to what has been written by Caſpar. Zeigler on the ſubject; as alſo to Baſnage's *Annal. Politico-Eccleſ. ad Ann.* xxxv. tom. i. p. 450.; and Bingham's *Origines Eccleſiaſt.* lib. ii. cap. xx. p. 296, et ſeq.

[*n*] Of all that I here ſtate, the greater part is, with a very moderate degree of trouble, to be proved from Scripture itſelf. Indeed the authenticity of it has been already ſo proved. I ſhall, therefore, content myſelf with merely adding a few obſervations, illuſtrative of ſuch things as may appear to require ſome elucidation. In the firſt place, then, it may be proper for me to remark, that in enumerating the conſtituent parts of a church, I have intentionally avoided making uſe of the terms *clergy* and *laity*:—not that I can perceive any thing objectionable in theſe terms, when properly explained; but leſt, by my having recourſe to them, I ſhould afford occaſion to ſome to doubt of my impartiality. I cannot, however, avoid taking this opportunity of profeſſing myſelf to be utterly unappriſed of any good that has reſulted from the violent and long continued diſputes which have been carried on, reſpecting the antiquity and origin of theſe appellations. For my own part, I agree in opinion with thoſe who conceive them to have come very early into uſe,—in fact, to have been nearly coëval with the firſt riſe of Chriſtianity; but, at the ſame time, of any thing that is to be gained by eſtabliſhing this opinion, I am altogether ignorant. In like manner am I an entire ſtranger to any advantage that is to be expected from the carrying of their point, by thoſe who undertake to prove that theſe terms were not known in the church prior to the third century. Facts and ordinances conſtitute the proper objects of our attention when inquiring into the ſtate of the primitive church, not particular appellations or terms, which, whether they

Of theſe parts, the chief in point of authority was the people: for to them belonged the appointment of the biſhop and preſbyters, as well as of the inferior miniſters;—with them reſided the power of enacting laws, as alſo of adopting or rejecting whatever might be propoſed in the general aſſemblies, and of expelling and again receiving into communion any depraved or unworthy members. In ſhort, nothing whatever of any moment could be determined on, or carried into effect, without their knowledge and concurrence. All theſe rights came to be recogniſed as appertaining to, and reſiding in the people, in conſequence of its being entirely by them that the neceſſary means were ſupplied for maintaining the teachers and miniſters, relieving the wants of the indigent, promoting the general intereſts and welfare of the community, and averting from it occaſionally impending ill. The contributions thus furniſhed conſiſted of all kinds of offerings, or *oblations* as they were commonly termed, which every one according to his ability, and of his own free will, without any ſort of demand or admonition, brought with him to the aſſembly, and threw into the common ſtock. After ſome little while, it was judged expedient to divide the multitude into two orders or claſſes, *viz.* that of the *faithful*, and that of the *catechumens* [*o*]. Of theſe, the former were ſuch as had

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they be of ancient or of modern origin, can in no ſhape alter the nature of things. In order to acquire a proper knowledge of the latter, we muſt purſue a courſe of ſtudy far different from that of words.

[*o*] At the firſt, there was no diſtinction recogniſed in the church between the *faithful* and the *candidates for baptiſm*, or catechumens; nor do I think that any veſtige of ſuch a diviſion of the people is to be found throughout the

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had been ſolemnly admitted members of the church by the ſacrament of baptiſm, and publicly pledged themſelves to God and the brethren that they would ſtrictly conform themſelves to the laws of the community, and who, in conſequence thereof, poſſeſſed the right of voting in the public aſſemblies, and of being preſent at, and taking a ſhare in, every part of divine worſhip.—The

whole of the New Teſtament,—any, at leaſt, that can be deemed clear and indiſputable. Whoever, through the powerful operation of divine truth, had been brought to profeſs a belief in Chriſt as the Saviour of the human race, although they might in other reſpects be uninformed, and various errors might ſtill remain to be rooted out of their minds, were yet baptized, and admitted into the fellowſhip of Chriſt's kingdom. The growth and increaſe of the church would have been beyond meaſure retarded, had no one in thoſe early times been received into the Chriſtian community but ſuch as had gone through a long courſe of probation, and had acquired an accurate knowledge of the religion they were about to embrace. When Chriſtianity, however, had obtained for itſelf ſomewhat of a more ſtable footing, ſo that in many places very large congregations of its profeſſors were eſtabliſhed, it was deemed expedient that none ſhould be received into the church but ſuch as had made themſelves thoroughly acquainted with the Chriſtian diſcipline, and had given convincing proofs of their poſſeſſing a ſincere and upright mind. This regulation being once introduced, it unavoidably gave riſe to the diſtinction between the *faithful* and the *catechumens*, or between thoſe who were *fully* and ſuch as were merely *partially* admitted into the Chriſtian fellowſhip. Many have written on the ſubject of the catechumens, and particularly Tob. Pfanner, in whoſe book, however, I have to regret the ſame deficiency that occurs in almoſt every other work on Chriſtian antiquities, namely, that although the things themſelves be perſpicuouſly diſcuſſed, and ſatisfactorily eſtabliſhed by a reference to ancient authorities, yet the cauſes to which the laws and inſtitutions of the primitive church owed their riſe are either wholly paſſed over, or but ſlightly hinted at. This defect, however, is not of ſo ſerious a nature but that it may, without much difficulty, be ſupplied by any one of common learning and capacity.

latter

latter were thoſe converts who, not having gone through the courſe of preparatory diſcipline and probation preſcribed by the rules of the church, remained as yet unbaptized, and whoſe title to the rights of Chriſtian fellowſhip was conſequently deemed incomplete. Theſe were not permitted to be preſent at the ſolemn aſſemblies of the church, or to join in the public worſhip; neither were they ſuffered to participate of the Lord's ſupper. All the members of the Chriſtian community conſidered themſelves as being on a footing of the moſt perfect equality.—Amongſt a variety of other proofs which they gave of this, it was particularly manifeſted by their reciprocally making uſe of the terms "brethren," and "ſiſters," in accoſting each other [*p*]. On the ground of this ſort of ſpiritual relationſhip, the utmoſt care was taken that none ſhould be ſuffered to languiſh in poverty or diſtreſs; ſince, whilſt the means of aſſiſtance were not wanting, it would have been contrary to the laws of fraternal love to have permitted any brother or ſiſter to remain without the neceſſaries of life [*q*]. That even in this early

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[*p*] Reſpecting the terms "brethren" and "ſiſters," thus made uſe of to denote the perfect equality that was underſtood to exiſt amongſt all the members of the Chriſtian community, there was a book publiſhed at Goſlar, 1703, in 8vo. by Gothofred Arnold, under the title of *Hiſtoria Cognationis ſpiritualis veterum Chriſtianorum*. Like all the other works, however, of that author, who, although a well-intentioned man, and one by no means deſtitute of learning, was yet poſſeſſed of but a very moderate ſhare of ſagacity or judgment, it exhibits an undigeſted farrago of facts and opinions, by which the mind of the reader is embarraſſed and diſtracted, inſtead of being gratified and enlightened.

[*q*] What St. Luke has left us on record in Acts, iv. 34. reſpecting the primitive church at Jeruſalem, namely, that

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early age, there was in the church a mixture of the bad with the good, is what no one can doubt:

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none of its members lacked or were in want, may, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, be applied to all the other early churches. Since the Chriſtians conſidered themſelves to be all on an equal footing, and all united in one common bond of fraternal love, they of courſe deemed it incumbent on them to take care that none of their number ſhould be deſtitute of the neceſſaries of life; but that, if any were in want of theſe, their neceſſities ſhould be ſupplied out of the abundance of the others. Amongſt thoſe of the preſent day, however, who pique themſelves on the faculty of ſeeing farther into things than other people, there are not a few who take exception to this liberality of the primitive Chriſtians towards their poor, on the ſcore of imprudence,—alleging that it tended to the encouragement of idleneſs and ſloth. They are alſo fond of adding, that the compaſſion and regard thus ſhewn for the indigent and neceſſitous, muſt be conſidered as the cauſe which, beyond all others, contributed to the rapid propagation of the Chriſtian religion: for that, under the expectation of being ſupported in eaſe and comfort by the liberality of others, without any care or pains of their own, vaſt crowds of idle, worthleſs, lazy people were led to embrace with eagerneſs the Chriſtian fellowſhip. But that any thing like this ſhould be urged by men, who would fain be thought no ſtrangers to the apoſtles' writings, is truly amazing. Had thoſe writings ever been peruſed by them with attention, nothing but the moſt wilful and inveterate blindneſs could have prevented them from perceiving that the liberality of the Chriſtians towards their poor was regulated by the moſt diſcreet proviſions, ſo as to render it nearly impoſſible that the munificence of the church could be either abuſed or miſapplied. In the firſt place, it is expreſsly enjoined by St. Paul, that none ſhould be included in the number of the poor who would not endeavour, as far as they were able, to ſupport themſelves by honeſt labour. Indeed, they were not only to be refuſed relief, but were to be abſolutely expelled from the church. All, likewiſe, that did not conduct themſelves as became the diſciples of Chriſt, were to be withdrawn from, and to be denied the benefits of Chriſtian charity. 2 Theſſ. iii. 6—12. In the next place, we find it laid down in clear and expreſs terms, as the duty of every Chriſtian family to provide, as far as they were able, for thoſe of their own kindred, and not ſuffer them to become a burthen to the church. 1 Tim. v. 3.

doubt:—it is impoſſible, however, that any one belonging to the Chriſtian community could have openly perſiſted in a wicked, flagitious courſe of conduct; ſince it was particularly enjoined both by Chriſt and his apoſtles, that if repeated admonition and reproof ſhould fail to produce repentance and amendment of life in any who might pollute themſelves by a depraved demeanor, or by flagrantly violating the laws of morality and religion, they ſhould be excommunicated, or in other words, be expelled from every kind of intercourſe and aſſociation with the faithful [*r*].

XLVI. Both

v. 3. 16. By another apoſtolic admonition, particular care is enjoined to be taken that evil-diſpoſed perſons might not be furniſhed, through the bounty of the church, with the means for vicious gratification. And laſtly, in addition to all this, it is ſtill further directed that the number of thoſe to whom public relief was granted ſhould not be ſuffered to increaſe beyond meaſure, or ſo as to preſs too hard on the means of thoſe by whom ſuch relief was ſupplied. It was not, therefore, every one who might happen to be deſtitute, or in need, that was regarded by the primitive church in the light of a pauper, meriting charitable aſſiſtance. To entitle a man to public relief amongſt the firſt Chriſtians, it was neceſſary that he ſhould appear to be duly impreſſed with a proper ſenſe of his duty towards God and mankind; and that he ſhould not either be capable of procuring a ſubſiſtence for himſelf by any exertions of his own, or have any relatives or connections to whom he might with any degree of juſtice or propriety be referred for aſſiſtance adequate to his wants.

[*r*] It appears to me that if the voice of reaſon and common ſenſe be attended to, not a queſtion can for a moment exiſt as to the juſtice and propriety of expelling from any community all ſuch of its members as may forfeit the pledge publicly given by them on their being admitted into ſuch community, and contemptuouſly perſiſt in an open violations of its laws. The dictates of reaſon, indeed, as to this point, are, in my opinion, ſo unequivocally clear and imperative, that I am altogether filled with aſtoniſhment when

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XLVI. Both the teachers and the miniſters of the church, when their appointment had received the approbation of the people, were conſecrated by the preſbyters to their office by prayer and the impoſition of hands;—a practice which the Chriſtians adopted from the Jews, probably on account of its very high antiquity, and the great appearance of piety which it carried with it. The duties of the preſbyters conſiſted in inſtructing and exhorting the multitude, both publicly and in private. It belonged to them alſo to endeavour, by argument and perſuaſion, to convince and bring over the adverſaries and enemies of the faith [*s*]. The converts were baptized by them. They alſo preſided at the feaſts of love, and celebration of the Lord's ſupper. In ſhort, they were inveſted with the ſuperintendance and management of every thing which might be eſſentially connected with the welfare and proſperity, either of the church in its collective capacity, or of its ſeveral members individually. When it came to be the practice for a chief or

when I reflect on the number of eminently learned men,—men, too, particularly verſed in the principle and nature of laws, divine as well as human, who have not ſcrupled peremptorily to maintain that the practice of excommunicating evil-doers, or expelling them from the church, has no other ſupport or foundation than the ancient Jewiſh law, or the mere arbitrary will of the firſt Chriſtians. But the influence which opinions, that we have been once led to entertain and approve of, have on our future judgment is incredible. Whatever may appear to oppoſe itſelf to them is not for a moment to be liſtened to, however well it may be ſupported by either argument or evidence. To enter into any ſerious diſcuſſion of the matter, however, in this place would be uſeleſs, ſince there is not the leaſt ground to hope for a revival of this pious and ſalutary cuſtom in times like the preſent.

[*s*] Tit. i. 9. 2 Tim. ii. 24.

preſiding

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preſiding preſbyter to be appointed, under the title of "biſhop," the province of teaching, and alſo the direction and management of every thing of a ſacred nature, was transferred to him. As it was not, however, to be expected that one man could be equal to the perſonal diſcharge of duties ſo various and extenſive, he had the power of committing to either of the elders the fulfilment of ſuch of them as that elder might appear to him to be particularly well qualified to execute. When any thing of more than ordinary moment occurred, the biſhop called together the preſbyters, and conſulted with them as to what was neceſſary or proper to be done. Having thus taken council with the elders, he next convened a general meeting of the people, to whoſe determination every thing of importance was always finally referred, and ſubmitted to them, for their approval or rejection, the meaſures which appeared to him and the preſbyters as either requiſite or eligible to be purſued [*t*]. The biſhop was commonly choſen from amongſt the preſbyters; and the preſbyters, for the moſt part, taken from the claſs of deacons. The people, however, were not bound to abide by this rule; and it was occaſionally departed from, when the probity, the faith, and the general merits of any individual amongſt the multitude pointed him out as a perſon deſerving of preference. That the income or ſtipend of the ſeveral teachers and miniſters of the church could have been but ſmall, whilſt, at the ſame time, the trouble and perils which they neceſſarily had to encounter in the diſcharge of their functions were manifold and great, is ſo apparent as not to admit of a

[*t*] Acts, xxi. 18. 22.

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XLVII. The particular form or manner of proceeding in thoſe ſolemn aſſemblies, which were held at ſtated intervals for the purpoſes of divine worſhip, does not appear at the firſt to have been every where preciſely ſimilar [*u*]. It was

[*u*] Next to the writings of the New Teſtament, the moſt ancient authority that we have reſpecting the forms and method obſerved by the Chriſtians of the firſt century, in their aſſemblies for the purpoſe of divine worſhip, is Pliny the Younger, a Roman of conſiderable eminence, who held the office of proprætor of Bithynia under the emperor Trajan. The particulars relating to this ſubject, which are contained in that well-known letter of his to his imperial maſter, (the xcviith of the xth book,) on which ſo much attention has been beſtowed in the way of illuſtration by the learned, were collected, as he himſelf expreſsly intimates, from the mouths of a number of perſons who, intimidated by the fear of death, had renounced Chriſtianity, and returned back to the worſhip of the Roman deities. The generality of people would, in all probability, have given implicit credit to ſo many perſons, when thus found to agree in one and the ſame account: but to the mind of Pliny, a man, as it ſhould ſeem, beyond meaſure cautious and circumſpect, this united teſtimony did not appear altogether concluſive. Informed, as he was, of the various reports that were in conſtant circulation amongſt the prieſts and populace, reſpecting the infamous clandeſtine practices and vile repaſts of the Chriſtians, and finding no correſpondence whatever between thoſe reports and the teſtimony of the above-mentioned repudiators of Chriſtianity, (for they were all of them unanimous in aſſerting that, in the aſſemblies of the Chriſtians, nothing was ever done in which it might be deemed at all diſgraceful for a virtuous man

was frequently required that much ſhould be conceded to place, to time, and to various other circumſtances.

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man and good citizen to join,) he ſeems to have been apprehenſive of being made the dupe of diſſemblers, and to have entertained ſome doubt as to whether he ought to give the preference in point of credit to general report, or to the evidence of theſe particular witneſſes. With a view, therefore, to arrive at greater certainty as to this point, he ſubjected two deaconeſſes of the Chriſtians who fell into his hands, and who appear to have been of the rank of ſervants, to the torture, expecting thereby to obtain a full diſcloſure of the truth. Of the information that was extorted from them he ſpeaks merely in general terms. *Quo magis*, ſays he, *neceſſarium credidi*, (it is apparent, therefore, that he entertained ſome ſuſpicion as to the accuracy of the teſtimony of thoſe renunciators of Chriſtianity whom he had before examined,) *ex duabus ancillis, quæ miniſtræ dicebantur, quid eſſet veri et per tormenta quærere. Sed nihil aliud inveni quam ſuperſtitionem pravam et immodicam.* From theſe words of the proconſul, we may collect that he ſucceeded in obtaining from theſe women ſome additional teſtimony; but it is, at the ſame time, clear that he had been able to extort from them nothing whatever that tended, in any reſpect, to contradict or invalidate the account given by thoſe whom he had before examined. The expreſſion *ſuperſtitio prava et immodica*, although it conveys ſomewhat of a degrading and injurious imputation, and was evidently intended by Pliny ſo to do, has yet nothing in it which can be ſaid in any wiſe to ſully or derogate from the pure and ſacred character of Chriſtianity. The term "ſuperſtition" is applied by him to it, in conſequence of its being a religion which differed in its principles and nature from that of the Romans, and which diſcountenancing the worſhip of their ancient deities, would ſubſtitute for it that of Jeſus Chriſt. The epithet *pravus* was, we know, uſed to denote in any thing the oppoſite quality to *rectus*:—the latter, therefore, implying a conſonancy with that which is fit, proper, and agreeable to rule; the former muſt, of courſe, be underſtood as indicating a want of ſuch conſonancy. By terming Chriſtianity then *prava ſuperſtitio*, nothing more appears to have been meant than that it was a religion of an oppoſite character to the approved and eſtabliſhed Roman mode of worſhip. The Romans, for inſtance, were accuſtomed to offer up victims to their gods, and to dedicate to them temples,

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circumſtances. From what is left us on record, however, in the books of the New Teſtament, and

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temples, altars, ſtatues, and images. Their invocations and prayers to them were alſo accompanied with a long and varied train of ceremonies. But the Chriſtian mode of worſhip was, on the contrary, in every reſpect characteriſed by the utmoſt plainneſs and ſimplicity. To Pliny, therefore, the latter, inaſmuch as it oppoſed itſelf to what had received the ſanction of long eſtabliſhed and general uſage, had the appearance of being (*prava*) founded in perverſion and error. He likewiſe applies to it the epithet *immodica*, meaning thereby, as it ſhould ſeem, that it was a religion of extravagance,—a religion not limited either by the bounds which the wiſdom of antiquity had preſcribed, or by thoſe which were to be deduced from the dictates of philoſophy. *Immodicus* was, we are certain, a term uſed by the Romans to characteriſe any thing by which a perſon was led into extravagance, or carried away beyond the bounds or rule aſſigned by reaſon, or the laws of the ſtate. Now Pliny could have known no other bounds or rule for religion than the two above mentioned, namely, the rule preſcribed by reaſon or philoſophy, and that laid down by the Roman laws: and it appears to me, therefore, that by denominating the Chriſtian diſcipline *immodica*, it was unqueſtionably the intention of this illuſtrious writer to intimate that it impoſed greater and more difficult duties on mankind than were preſcribed either by philoſophy or by the ancient religion of the Roman people. With regard to the love of mankind, for inſtance, the principles recognized by the Roman people at large, and even by the moſt excellent of their philoſophers, were that we ought to love and cheriſh our friends, and that no wrong or injury ſhould be done to any one except our enemies: the latter, however, might, according to them, be without impropriety hated, and in every poſſible way vexed and perſecuted. But the divine author of Chriſtianity enjoins that our love of each other ſhould be limited by no ſuch bounds, but extend itſelf even to our enemies and greateſt foes. By a Roman, then, the principles of Chriſtianity might, in this reſpect, very naturally be conſidered as (*immodica*) exceeding the bounds of propriety. I have been induced thus to beſtow ſome little pains in the illuſtration of theſe words, from my obſerving that the various learned commentators on Pliny have paſſed them over with but a ſlight notice. On the whole,

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and ſome other very ancient documents, it appears that the courſe obſerved in moſt of the churches

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it appears to me, that at the moment when this illuſtrious writer intended nothing leſs than to pay any ſort of compliment to Chriſtianity, he in fact pronounced its eulogium; and that, by the very terms which he applied to it in the way of reproof, he in reality eſtabliſhes its claim to the character of ſuperior wiſdom and excellence.—Let us now turn our attention towards, and briefly examine thoſe particulars, reſpecting the forms of divine worſhip obſerved by the firſt Chriſtians, which Pliny ſtates himſelf to have obtained from the many witneſſes which he had examined, of whom ſome had renounced Chriſtianity, others not. Great as is the number of commentators who have gone before us in this path, we may yet, I rather think, be able to pick up ſomewhat in the way of gleaning. In the firſt place, I will lay before the reader the words of Pliny himſelf, from the Geſnerian edition of his works, the moſt correct of any that have as yet been given to the public. *Adfirmabant autem, hanc fuiſſe ſummam vel culpæ ſuæ vel erroris, quod eſſent ſoliti ſtato die ante lucem convenire: carmenque Chriſto, quaſi deo, dicere ſecum invicem: ſeque ſacramento non in ſcelus aliquod obſtringere, ſed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depoſitum appellati abnegarent: quibus peractis, morem ſibi diſcedendi fuiſſe, rurſuſque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiſcuum tamen et innocuum.* "They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a certain ſtated day before it was light, and addreſſed themſelves in a form of prayer to Chriſt, as to ſome god, binding themſelves by a ſolemn oath, not for the purpoſes of any wicked deſign, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falſify their word, nor deny a truſt when they ſhould be called upon to deliver it up: after which, it was their cuſtom to ſeparate, and then re-aſſemble to eat in common a harmleſs meal." (Melmoth.) Now it muſt immediately, I think, be remarked by every one who ſhall peruſe this paſſage with attention, that the ſketch which it exhibits of the forms obſerved by the Chriſtians in their ſolemn aſſemblies is throughout but an imperfect one, and that in many reſpects it is wholly deficient. Not a word, for inſtance, is ſaid of the exhortation or ſermon uſually delivered by one of the preſbyters or the biſhop, or of the reading a portion of the Scriptures; nor is there any notice taken of the celebration of

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churches was as follows.—After certain introductory prayers, (with the offering up of which there

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of the Lord's ſupper, or of the oblations which it was cuſtomary for the communicants to offer.' In making his report to Trajan, Pliny probably ſaw no neceſſity for ſetting down all that he had learnt from the witneſſes, but deemed it ſufficient to lay before the emperor merely ſuch particulars as would give him an inſight into the nature of the Chriſtian diſcipline, and ſatisfy him that thoſe who had embraced it were far from being of a character either ſo deteſtable or dangerous as that which was attributed to them by vulgar report. For Pliny's epiſtle, from beginning to end, is unqueſtionably to be regarded in the light of an apology for the Chriſtians; the object of it evidently being to refute thoſe calumnies under which they laboured, and to incline the emperor to treat with lenity and compaſſion a ſet of men, who, although they had eſpouſed a different religion from that of the Romans, yet appeared to him to cheriſh no principles either of a vicious or dangerous tendency. In addition to this, it muſt neceſſarily be obſerved, (and it will preſently be rendered more ſtrikingly manifeſt,) that the information thus communicated by Pliny to the emperor is conveyed rather in terms and phraſes of his own, than in thoſe which it is at all likely that the Chriſtians whom he had examined made uſe of; and that, in a certain degree, his deſcription of the Chriſtian ſacred rites obviouſly, and as it were by way of illuſtration, accommodates itſelf to the Roman way of thinking on the ſubject. This, I have no doubt, was the reſult of deſign; his object in it being, as I conceive, to render the matter more intelligible and eaſy of apprehenſion than it would otherwiſe have been to Trajan, who was an utter ſtranger to the maxims and inſtitutions of the Chriſtians, and wholly unacquainted with their affairs. Had Pliny, in his account of the Chriſtian principles and cuſtoms, made uſe of Chriſtian terms and phraſes, the emperor would in all probability have found no ſmall difficulty in aſcertaining the meaning of many of them, and might poſſibly have underſtood ſome parts of the letter in a ſenſe very different from that which it was the object and intention of the writer to convey. But to come to particulars.—The account commences by ſtating in general terms, that the ſolemn aſſemblies of the Chriſtians were held on a certain fixed day. This fixed day, as may be proved from the epiſtle itſelf, (and in another place I have ſo proved it,) was

there can be no doubt but that the ſervice commenced,) a ſelect portion of Scripture was read by

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was the ſame with that which we at preſent conſider as ſacred, namely, the firſt day of the week, the day on which our bleſſed Saviour aroſe from the dead. B. Juſt. Hen. Boehmer would indeed have us to underſtand this day to have been the ſame with the Jewiſh Sabbath; but notwithſtanding all that he has urged in his diſſertation *de Statu Chriſtianorum Die*, (which ſtands firſt in that ſeries of tracts, in which he undertakes to illuſtrate the ſacred rites, &c. of the Chriſtians from Pliny,) I rather think that he has not ſucceeded in making any converts to his opinion amongſt thoſe who have read what Pliny ſays with attention, and taken the pains to make themſelves acquainted with ancient manners. On this ſtated day, the Chriſtians of Bithynia, it appears, were accuſtomed to hold two diſtinct meetings: the one before ſun-riſe, for the worſhip of God, and furtherance of piety; the other in the courſe of the day, moſt probably about the time of noon, for the purpoſe of partaking together of a common meal or repaſt. With the Chriſtians of other countries it was not the cuſtom thus to divide their ſacred offices; but they went through the whole of whatever might be enjoined with regard to public worſhip at one and the ſame meeting. It is by no means difficult, however, to aſſign a very ſufficient reaſon for this deviation of the Bithynian Chriſtians from the general practice. Expoſed, as they were on all ſides, to the treachery of malignant foes, it would have been impoſſible for them to have met and gone through their forms of public worſhip during the day. Their aſſembly for this purpoſe, therefore, was held before ſun-riſe. To have joined in a meal, however, at this early hour would not have been ſeaſonable or convenient; and the feaſt of love was, therefore, deferred until that time of the day, which in thoſe regions was cuſtomarily allotted to bodily refection. The public worſhip, for the performance of which the firſt of theſe meetings was held, commenced with the offering up of prayers, in which they gave praiſe to Chriſt, and extolled the bleſſings to mankind of which he was the author. Theſe prayers Pliny ſtates them to have recited *ſecum invicem*. Now by the former of theſe words, I conceive him to have meant, that the prayers thus offered up were general ones, in which every perſon preſent joined. With regard to the term *invicem*, learned men have imagined that we ought to underſtand it as indicating the manner in which

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which theſe prayers were recited; and that it has, in this place, a ſimilar import with *alternatim*; implying, as they would have it, that in the aſſemblies of which we are ſpeaking, the Chriſtians divided themſelves into two choirs, and that the praiſes of Chriſt were alternately celebrated by each. For my own part, I ſhould not by any means wiſh to be underſtood as pronouncing this opinion to be erroneous; but, at the ſame time, I cannot help obſerving that it appears to me not at all improbable that Pliny might have recourſe to the term *invicem*, by way of briefly expreſſing what the Chriſtians had told him, of its being uſual for one of their preſbyters, or their biſhop, firſt to recite the form of prayer, and then for the people to repeat it after him, and add the word "amen" at the concluſion. Were the term to be conſidered as having this reference, we ſhould unqueſtionably find leſs difficulty in making it accord with what we know of the forms and uſages of the early ages. As to the force or preciſe meaning of the words *quaſi deo*, I muſt confeſs that I really do not feel myſelf at all competent to ſpeak with deciſion. For it appears to me to be altogether uncertain whether Pliny, in this place, makes uſe of words of his own, or adopts thoſe of the Chriſtians whom he had examined. If the expreſſion is to be conſidered as Pliny's own, it certainly cannot be adduced as a proof that thoſe Chriſtians entertained a ſimilar opinion with ourſelves as to the divinity of Chriſt: for *deus*, as is well obſerved by that excellent ſcholar and ſagacious commentator, Jo. Matth. Geſner, in his remarks on this paſſage, was a term in the uſe of which the Romans allowed themſelves conſiderable latitude; and ſo far from conſidering it as excluſively appropriate to the divine nature, were in the habit of not unfrequently applying it to ſpiritual beings of a very inferior order. On the other hand, could it be aſcertained that *quaſi deo* were the words of the Chriſtians whom Pliny examined, there muſt at once be an end to all doubt as to the fact of thoſe Chriſtians having worſhipped our bleſſed Saviour as the Supreme Deity.—With regard to the word *carmen*, it admits of ſome queſtion whether we ought to underſtand by it that theſe prayers of the Chriſtians were compoſed according to the rules of metre, and conſequently ſung; or whether the term is to be conſidered as implying in this place, what we frequently find it applied

pointment of biſhops, the biſhop, addreſſed himſelf to the people in a grave and pious diſcourſe; not, to elſewhere, merely a ſet form of words in proſe. Some of the higheſt authorities, including the celebrated Geſner, lean in favour of the latter conſtruction; and influenced chiefly by the weight of ſuch judgment, I was led to give the preference to this opinion in my *Hiſtor. Chriſtian. Inſtitutiones majores*, ſæc. i. The former conſtruction of the word has, however, found an able advocate in a learned writer, whoſe maſterly diſcuſſion of the ſubject, under the aſſumed title of *Hymnophilus*, is to be found in the fifth volume of the *Miſcellanea Lipſienſ. nova* of the learned Menckenius. After having compared together the different arguments brought forward on either ſide, I muſt confeſs it now appears to me ſcarcely poſſible to ſay which way the ſcale preponderates. Thoſe eminent ſcholars, to whoſe opinion I formerly ſubſcribed, bring forward, in ſupport of their conſtruction of the word, the authority of a great number of ancient Latin writers, and beyond all, that of Pliny himſelf, in whoſe writings, they obſerve, the word *carmen* is ſeveral times put for prayers in proſe. The verb *dicere*, too, they bid us remark, which Pliny in this place joins with *carmen*, will not admit of the ſuppoſition that compoſitions in verſe were here alluded to; for that had real verſes been meant, they would have been ſtated (*cani*) to be ſung, not (*dici*) ſaid. But of theſe arguments, neither the one nor the other can be deemed concluſive. For as to the firſt, it can by no means be allowed to follow, that becauſe the word *carmen* is frequently put by Pliny and others for a compoſition in proſe, it may not have a different ſignification in the paſſage in queſtion; and particularly if it be conſidered that in the one caſe it is uſed in an extraordinary ſenſe, but in the other merely in an ordinary one. And with regard to the arguments deduced from the word *dicere*, a variety of paſſages might be quoted, which would ſhew that this verb was occaſionally put for *cantare*, and aſſociated with *carmen* in its ſtrict ſenſe. In the *Carmen ſæculare* of Horace, for inſtance, ver. 6, 7, 8, we find,

> "*Quo Sybillini monuere verſus*
> *Virgines lectas, puerosque caſtos,*
> *Diis, quibus ſeptem placuere colles,*
> Dicere carmen."

Indiſputably alluding to the ſinging of a hymn, or compoſition in verſe. Virgil too, when ſpeaking of the hymn which

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not, as it ſhould ſeem, compoſed according to the rules of art, but recommending itſelf to attention and

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which the huſbandmen were accuſtomed to ſing to Ceres, before putting the ſickle to the corn, *Georg.* lib. i. ver. 348, et ſeq. ſays,

" ——————*Neque ante*
Falcem maturis quiſquam ſupponat ariſtis,
Quam Cereri, torta redimitus tempora quercu,
Det motus incompoſitos, et carmina dicat."

And again, when deſcribing a part of the inhabitants of the Elyſian Fields as occupied in ſong and dance, *Æneid.* lib. vi. ver. 644.

" *Pars pedibus plaudunt choreas, et* carmina dicunt."

The very learned writer, to whom I have above alluded as taking with others the oppoſite ſide of the queſtion, reſts his argument principally upon the word *carmen*,—reminding us that it ſtrictly and properly ſignifies a ſong, and contending that the ſtrict and proper ſignification of a word is not to be departed from, unleſs through evident neceſſity. Now all this is certainly very well obſerved. But the advocates for the former opinion may reply, that this learned writer himſelf is one of the firſt to break through the rule which he thus preſcribes to others, of adhering to the ſtrict and proper ſignification of words, by inſiſting that we ought to underſtand Pliny as uſing *dicere* in the ſenſe of *cantare:* for that this is literally rejecting the plain and commonly accepted meaning of the former verb, and annexing to it a remote and unuſual ſignification, without any apparent neceſſity for ſo doing. In ſupport of this conſtruction, indeed, he adduces the authority of Euſebius and Tertullian: the latter (in *Apologetic.* cap. ii.) making uſe of the term *canere*, as expreſſive of Pliny's meaning; and the former (in his *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſt.* lib. iii. cap. 33.) rendering the words *carmen dicere* into Greek by the verb ὑμνεῖν. Now this is certainly a circumſtance not unworthy of remark; but, at the ſame time, it cannot be conſidered as altogether ſo concluſive as to place the matter beyond doubt: for were the queſtion to be agitated, it is very poſſible that much difference of opinion might be found to prevail with regard to the merits of Tertullian and Euſebius as tranſlators of Pliny. As to any thing elſe connected with this point, I purpoſely paſs it over. Theſe prayers, then, whether in verſe or in proſe, having been offered up, the Chriſtians, according to Pliny, *ſacramento ſe obſtringebant, &c.* " bound themſelves

and reſpect through the unaffected piety and fervent zeal of the preacher. In this diſcourſe, the

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by an oath not to commit theft, robbery, or any other crime forbidden by law." But in this inſtance, it is plainly to be perceived that we have not the words of the Chriſtians themſelves given to us. The terms here uſed muſt be conſidered as belonging entirely to Pliny, who endeavoured, by clothing the information he had taken down from the mouths of the Chriſtians in a Roman dreſs, to render it eaſier of comprehenſion to the emperor, and thus the more readily to ſatisfy him of the innocent and harmleſs character of the religion which theſe people profeſſed. With regard to what he here firſt ſays, of its having been the practice of the Chriſtians in their aſſemblies, *ſacramento ſe obſtringere*, "to bind themſelves by an oath," that is, *to ſwear*, that they would lead a chaſte life, &c. it is altogether a miſrepreſentation of the fact: and I know not how to account for it, that learned men, who do not appear to have been ignorant of the utter diſlike which the early Chriſtians had to oaths of any ſort, ſhould for a moment have brought themſelves to believe that ſuch was the caſe. For is it at all credible that men ſo exceedingly reſerved and ſcrupulous in ſwearing, be the occaſion what it might, ſhould have regularly bound themſelves by an oath, whenever they aſſembled together for the purpoſes of divine worſhip? This difficulty has not indeed eſcaped the obſervation of ſome men of erudition, and they have endeavoured to obviate it by ſuggeſting that when the Chriſtians, in the courſe of their examination, made mention of their *ſacraments*, Pliny might not be aware of their meaning, but conceive that the term was uſed by them in its literal Roman ſenſe; whereas what they alluded to were certain rites of their own, to which they had given the denomination of ſacraments, namely, baptiſm and the ſupper of the Lord. The conjecture is certainly ingenious, but beyond this we can allow it to poſſeſs no merit whatever. For not to mention other things by which it might be ſhewn to be utterly deſtitute of foundation, its fallacy is rendered ſufficiently apparent by Pliny himſelf, who expreſsly ſtates that ſacrament of which he ſpeaks, to have been comprehended in the firſt part of the Chriſtian worſhip; whereas the celebration of what were termed ſacraments by the Chriſtians, did not belong to that portion of their divine ſervice. The Lord's ſupper, in particular, is known to have always formed a branch of

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that latter or concluding part of their public worſhip, to which we ſhall preſently advert. To me it appears moſt likely, that the Chriſtians ſimply repreſented themſelves as making a ſolemn promiſe to the Almighty, whenever they aſſembled together, that they would ſtrive to lead a life of purity and innocence; and that Pliny, perceiving little or no difference between a promiſe of this ſort and an oath, by way of making a ſtronger impreſſion on Trajan's mind, preferred expreſſing himſelf after the Roman manner, and ſtated them *ſacramento ſe obſtringere*. It yields a further argument againſt our believing that the Chriſtians were accuſtomed in their aſſemblies to take an oath to the above effect, that not the leaſt veſtige whatever of any ſuch periodical repetition of the articles of their profeſſion is to be met with in any of the monuments of antiquity; nor was it at all neceſſary. The practice was, for thoſe who embraced Chriſtianity, once, namely, at the time of their initiation, to pledge themſelves ſolemnly to God that they would lead a life conformable to the religion they had eſpouſed. After having done this, they do not appear to have been continually called upon for a repetition of their engagement, but were merely admoniſhed publicly by the preſbyters to beware of departing from, or forfeiting the ſolemn promiſe thus made. Finally, what Pliny thus reports to the emperor concerning the Chriſtians, *viz.* that they ſolemnly pledged themſelves to abſtain from the commiſſion of any acts that were forbidden as criminal by the Roman laws, ſuch as theft, robbery, adultery, violation of compacts, refuſal to reſtore any thing given merely in pledge, and the like, can never be conſidered as having conſtituted any very ſtriking feature in that moſt pure and holy ſyſtem of moral diſcipline, which the profeſſors of Chriſtianity made it their object to cheriſh and inculcate. Reſtrictions of this ſort might doubtleſs occupy a ſubordinate place in the Chriſtian code; but its injunctions mainly reſpected duties of a higher and more important nature:—that we were, for inſtance, to cheriſh the moſt unbounded reverence for God and his will; that our love ſhould be extended univerſally to all mankind; that we ſhould ever be ready to do good even to our enemies; and ſhould earneſtly ſtrive to ſubdue, and as it were extinguiſh, within ourſelves every ſort of unlawful appetite. There can be little or no doubt

and to embrace every occaſion of proving themſelves worthy diſciples of that divine Maſter, whoſe

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doubt that the Chriſtians whom Pliny examined pointed out theſe things to him, but that he deemed it unneceſſary to notice them; conceiving that every purpoſe he had in view would be ſufficiently anſwered, by his repreſenting to Trajan that no incongruity ſubſiſted between the Chriſtian diſcipline and the Roman laws, but that whatever was interdicted as criminal by the one was as ſtrictly prohibited by the other. To me it appears moſt likely, that the account given by the Chriſtians on this occaſion was to the following purport:—That after offering up their prayers to Chriſt, it was cuſtomary for one or other of their miniſters to read a portion of thoſe Scriptures which they held ſacred. That a ſolemn oration or ſermon was then delivered by a preſbyter, or the biſhop, in which thoſe preſent were exhorted to make what they had heard, the rule of their faith and conduct; abſtaining, as far as in them lay, from the commiſſion of evil of any kind; and that it was uſual for all of them to promiſe, ſilently within themſelves, that they would do ſo. If any refuſed to conform themſelves to the word, agreeably to this admonition, and preferred continuing in the practice of iniquity, they were excluded from all communication with the aſſembly. And this is the ſenſe which Tertullian, who perceived how widely Pliny's account, if taken literally, would differ in this reſpect from the practice of the firſt Chriſtians, annexes to the paſſage in queſtion. *Allegat*, ſays he, alluding to this letter of Pliny's, *nihil aliud ſe de ſacris eorum comperiſſe, quam cœtus ante lucanos ad canendum Chriſto ut deo, et ad conſœderandam diſciplinam, homicidium, adulterium, fraudem, perfidiam, et cætera ſcelera prohibentes.* (*Apologetic.* cap. ii.) The reader will perceive that this exactly correſponds with what I have above remarked. Nothing is here ſaid of the taking of any oath; nothing of any reiteration of the baptiſmal vow: on the contrary, the crimes which Pliny ſtates the Chriſtians to have abjured, are here repreſented as being merely prohibited, meaning doubtleſs forbidden by the mouth of the preacher. At their ſecond meeting, it was the practice of the Chriſtians to celebrate the feaſt of love, and the Lord's ſupper; of which two rites Pliny ſpeaks in the following terms: *Rurſuſque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiſcuum tamen et innoxium. Promiſcuus cibus*, it appears to me, is here put to denote food of the oppoſite quality to

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whoſe followers they profeſſed themſelves to be [v]. Some general prayers (the extemporaneous

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that which is exquiſite and delicate. By this expreſſion, therefore, it ſhould ſeem that Pliny meant to do away that ſuſpicion of indulging in luxury and voluptuous exceſs, which the enemies of the Chriſtians had excited againſt them; and to ſatisfy the emperor that in their repaſts they made uſe of nothing coſtly or delicate, but merely the plain and ordinary articles of food. The epithet *innoxius* was unqueſtionably intended by him to operate in direct refutation of a calumny reſpecting the Chriſtians, which had been very generally propagated throughout the confines of the Roman empire, and had ſerved to kindle amongſt the lower orders of the people a wonderful degree of animoſity towards them, namely, that of their occaſionally joining in a ſort of Thyeſtean banquet,—a charge of which we find frequent notice taken in the different apologies of the early Chriſtians.

[v] There are ſeveral, not to ſpeak merely of men of ordinary learning, but alſo of the better informed, who maintain that any individual amongſt the Chriſtians was, in this firſt age, at liberty to aſſume the office of a teacher in their ſolemn aſſemblies, and might there openly deliver his ſentiments on divine ſubjects, for the benefit of the fraternity at large. A very unwarrantable uſe, however, has been made of this opinion by ſome of the preſent day, who aim at bringing about a new order of things in the Chriſtian commonwealth, and would fain abrogate all rule; and jumbling every thing together, do away all ſort of diſtinction between teachers and learners. For my own part, could I perceive that ſuch an opinion was in any reſpect well founded, I would at once, without the leaſt heſitation, acknowledge it. In fact I could, in the preſent inſtance, have no temptation whatever to diſguiſe the truth; ſince, having never filled the office of a public teacher in the church, my intereſt is not at all involved in the queſtion: and beſides, I well know that ſhould ſuch or ſuch appear to have been the cuſtomary or eſtabliſhed practice of the firſt ages, it by no means follows that it ought not to have been deviated from in ſucceeding generations. But I moſt ſolemnly declare, that amongſt the various arguments and proofs which are adduced in ſupport of the above opinion, even by thoſe of the learned who have eſpouſed it, I have not been able to find any thing whatever that can, in my opinion, be conſidered as ſatisfactory,—I will not ſay by a man

raneous effusions, as it should seem, of a mind glowing with divine love) were then offered up aloud by the officiating minister, and repeated after him by the people. If there were any present who declared themselves to be commissioned of God to make known his will to the people, I mean persons professing themselves to be pro- CENT. I. Order of proceeding, when assembled.

man of acuteness and penetration, but by any one of common sense and understanding. So far as this, indeed, undoubtedly appears clear, that any one, whether he were a presbyter, or a bishop, or merely a person of the ordinary class, might use his endeavours to propagate the Christian religion, and exert himself to the best of his abilities in making known the blessings of celestial truth to those who lay chained in darkness and superstition. But does this, let me ask, at all support the idea that the office of teaching in the public assemblies of the Christians might be assumed by any of the brethren *ad libitum?* It is also unquestionable that the primitive Christians, in conformity to the direction of the apostles, were accustomed to admonish, exhort, and reprove each other. But there can be no doubt that this was done privately, and not openly in the face of the whole congregation, when assembled for the purposes of public worship. Finally, no one denies that the prophets, or those who asserted themselves to be under the influence of divine inspiration, had liberty to speak in the solemn assemblies of the church. But it appears to me truly astonishing that any one should bring forward this as an argument in favour of the opinion, that the office of teaching in public might of right be assumed by any of the brethren indiscriminately. If I am capable of forming any judgment at all on the subject, I am sure that what we know of these prophets, so far from yielding any argument in favour of such an opinion, makes directly the contrary way. It appears to me in fact altogether incontrovertible, that the prophets only had liberty to preach, and consequently that the liberty of preaching could not have belonged of common right to all the brethren; and that so far from its having been the practice for every one to address the brethren, in their public assemblies, who might feel inclined so to do, this privilege was confined merely to those who had given satisfactory proof of their being divinely commissioned to instruct the church.

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phets, they were now at liberty to addreſs the congregation. After having heard what they had to ſay, it was referred to the acknowledged prophets, to determine whether they ſpake under the influence of a mere natural impulſe, or were prompted in what they delivered by a divine inſpiration. To this firſt ſolemn act of public worſhip ſucceeded a ſecond, which commenced with the offering of certain voluntary gifts, or oblations, which all thoſe who were poſſeſſed of ſufficient ability were accuſtomed to bring with them, and preſent to the elders. From what was thus offered, the preſiding miniſter ſelected ſo much as might appear to him to be neceſſary for the celebration of the Lord's ſupper, and conſecrated it to that purpoſe in a ſet form of words; the people expreſſing their approval of his prayers, by pronouncing aloud the word "amen" at the concluſion of them. After partaking of the Lord's ſupper, the aſſembly ſat down to a ſober and ſacred repaſt, denominated the feaſt of love. In this, however, the ſame order was not obſerved in all the churches. At the breaking up of the aſſembly, the brethren and ſiſters exchanged with each other what, from its being meant as a token of mutual good will, was termed the kiſs of peace. How truly admirable the ſimplicity by which the rites of our holy religion were characterized in theſe its infant days [*w*]!

XLVIII. Al-

[*w*] The reader will find theſe particulars more fully diſcuſſed and illuſtrated in Bingham's *Origines Eccleſiaſticæ*, Cave's *Primitive Chriſtianity*, Goth. Arnold's work *de Vita et Moribus primorum Chriſtianorum*, and the writings of various other authors. It may not, however, be improper to appriſe him that conſiderable caution ought to be obſerved in reading books of this ſort; ſince, to paſs over other things,

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XLVIII. Although all the churches were, in this first age of Christianity, united together in one common bond of faith and love, and were in every respect ready to promote the interests and welfare of each other by a reciprocal interchange of good offices; yet with regard to government and internal economy, every individual church considered itself as an independent community, none of them ever looking in these respects beyond the circle of its own members for assistance, or recognizing any sort of external influence or authority. Neither in the New Testament, nor in any ancient document whatever, do we find any thing recorded, from whence it might be inferred that any of the minor churches were at all dependent on, or looked up for direction to, those of greater magnitude or consequence: on the contrary, several things occur therein, which put it out of all doubt that every one of them enjoyed the same rights, and was considered as being on a footing of the most perfect equality with the rest [*x*]. Indeed it cannot,—I will not say

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things, the authors of them have not been on all occasions sufficiently particular in the choice of their authorities, neither have they made a proper distinction with regard to times, or between such things as are certain and indisputable and such as are merely probable.

[*x*] It appears indeed from the Acts of the Apostles, that the dignity and authority of the church of Jerusalem was for a while very great. In cap. xv. we find the Christians of Antioch referring their disputes concerning the necessity of observing the law of Moses, to the judgment of this church; and it seems extremely probable that other churches might act in a similar way. St. Paul too, although acting under an immediately divine commission, yet made it a point to commend himself and his doctrine to the favour and approval of the apostles, and the church of Jerusalem. Gal. i. 18. ii. 7, 8, 9. But the authority thus recognised in this particular church, did not arise so much out of any

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ſay be proved, but even be made appear probable, from any teſtimony divine or human, that in

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thing like a ſuperiority over the other churches, (for it never laid claim to any ſuch pre-eminency,) as from the circumſtance of its being under the immediate care and government of our Lord's apoſtles, who were expreſsly conſtituted by him himſelf ſupreme directors and judges of all matters connected with religion. Properly ſpeaking, it was not to the church of Jeruſalem, but to the apoſtles who preſided over it, that the other churches had recourſe for direction. To confeſs the truth, however, it is not improbable that in dubious matters, even in the abſence of the apoſtles, application might oftener be made to this church than to any other for advice. For in the church of Jeruſalem there muſt have been a far greater number of inſpired perſons than was to be met with in any of the other churches; ſince the Holy Spirit, at the time of its miraculous effuſion, recorded in Acts, ii. did not deſcend merely on the apoſtles, but was poured out generally on all the diſciples of Chriſt in that city. The churches of Aſia, I have not the leaſt doubt, recognized a ſimilar authority in that of Epheſus, during the time that St. John preſided over it. Indeed it appears to me not at all unlikely, that the honour of being occaſionally looked up to by neighbouring churches for an example, both as to faith and practice, might be a diſtinction enjoyed by all ſuch of the churches as had had the good fortune to be under the immediate tuition and care of any of the apoſtles. Should any one require it, I will concede even more than this; for I am ſure it is my wiſh moſt readily to grant whatever can reaſonably be expected of me. I will admit then, that it was for ſome time cuſtomary for all the apoſtolical churches, that is, thoſe which had been founded and inſtructed by the apoſtles themſelves, to be conſulted reſpecting any new opinions that might be ſuggeſted, or any controverſies that might ariſe reſpecting religion. Of this cuſtom abundant teſtimony is to be collected from the writers of the ſecond century. The ſpiritual inſtructors of that age appear to have thought, and in my opinion not without reaſon, as things were then ſituated, that with regard to matters of faith and doctrine, it was not likely that any ſhould be better informed than thoſe who had been under the immediate tuition of the apoſtles themſelves. In the caſe, too, of any one's taking upon him to diſſeminate new opinions, and endeavouring to ſhelter himſelf

in this age it was the practice for ſeveral churches to enter into, and maintain amongſt themſelves that ſort of aſſociation, which afterwards came to ſubſiſt amongſt the churches of almoſt every province:—I allude to their aſſembling by their biſhops, at ſtated periods, for the purpoſe of enacting general laws, and determining any queſtions or controverſies that might ariſe reſpecting divine matters [y]. It is not until the ſecond century

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himſelf under apoſtolic authority, no more effectual way of repreſſing his preſumption could preſent itſelf than that of referring to the teſtimony of the churches which the apoſtles themſelves had founded. See, for inſtance, Tertullian *de Præſcript. adverſus Hæreticos.* It is a moſt egregious miſtake, however, for any one to imagine that we have in this any thing like a proof of an inequality having ſubſiſted amongſt the early churches, or of a judicial power having been poſſeſſed by ſuch of them as were apoſtolical. For to paſs over other things which might be urged, it was not to the churches, but to the apoſtles, the founders of thoſe churches, whoſe counſel and diſcipline were ſuppoſed ſtill to prevail in thoſe aſſemblies, that this judicial power was attributed; and by degrees, as the deciſions and authority of councils came to have more weight and influence, this ancient practice of recurring to the teſtimony of the apoſtolical churches fell into diſuſe. In fact, the thing was as much a matter of choice then, as at preſent it is with any one whether or not he will refer any doubts, with which he may be perplexed, to be reſolved by a college of divines in an univerſity. Certain I am that no proof whatever can be brought to ſhew that this ſort of reference to the apoſtolical churches was at all compulſory, or that their determinations were conſidered of ſuch authority as for it to be deemed impious in any one to decline complying with them. A great reverence was undoubtedly, during the firſt ages, entertained for ſuch of the churches as had been long under the immediate inſtruction of any of the apoſtles; but if any one thing be certain, I am perſuaded this is,—that theſe churches never poſſeſſed the power of governing or controuling the reſt according to their will.

[y] In St. Paul's epiſtles there are ſeveral paſſages, which plainly prove that the firſt churches were held together

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gether by no bond, ſave only that of faith and mutual love; and that each was governed and regulated by its own laws and inſtitutions. Thoſe ſeven epiſtles addreſſed to the Aſiatic churches, with which the Revelations open, exhibit likewiſe indiſputable teſtimony to the ſame effect. In the firſt place, nothing whatever is to be found in theſe epiſtles to warrant even a conjecture that theſe ſeven churches were united together by any ſort of conſociation, or that they were accuſtomed to aſſemble one with the other in the way of council: on the contrary, the circumſtance of our Saviour's not directing what he had to ſay to them collectively, but, whether it be in the way of commendation, of reprehenſion, or of admonition, addreſſing himſelf to each one ſeparately, tends unqueſtionably to prove that they had nothing in common, ſave that of their being of one and the ſame religious profeſſion. Had it been uſual for the biſhops of theſe churches to aſſemble and conſult together at ſtated periods, or when any thing new or extraordinary might occur, as was the practice in the ſecond century, it is not at all probable that the circumſtance would have been paſſed over by our Saviour without the ſmalleſt notice; but that, on the contrary, he would have recommended to the paſtors thus aſſociated the cultivation of prudence and harmony, and would have attributed to them chiefly whatever preſented itſelf either as exceptionable or praiſe-worthy in the ſtate of theſe churches. Again, another argument of ſtill greater cogency is to be drawn from theſe epiſtles:—for it appears by them that there was a conſiderable diverſity in the tenets and regulations of theſe ſeven churches. The Nicolaitans, for inſtance, whoever they might then be, were wholly excluded from the church of Epheſus, Rev. ii. 6.; whereas in that of Pergamos they had free toleration, Rev. ii. 15. The members of the church of Thyatira ſuffered thoſe to continue of their number who ate with the worſhippers of falſe deities in their temples, and were addicted to fornication; things which were for the moſt part held in utter abomination by the reſt. Now if the heads of churches, thus ſituated in one and the ſame province, had been accuſtomed occaſionally to meet for the purpoſe of conſulting together, and deliberating on the beſt means of promoting the common welfare of the aſſemblies over which they preſided, in what way are we to account for the exiſtence

be perceived; when we find them occurring here and there, ſome of them tolerably clear and diſtinct, others again but ſlight and faint: which ſeems plainly to prove that the practice aroſe ſubſequently to the times of the apoſtles, and that all that is urged concerning the councils of the firſt century, and the divine authority of councils, is ſuſtained merely by the moſt uncertain kind of ſupport, namely, the practice and opinion of more recent times [z].

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iſtence of this diverſity of ſentiments and moral diſcipline amongſt them? Had it at that time been the practice to hold councils, the caſe of the Nicolaitans would without doubt have been diſcuſſed therein; and either their tenets would have been ſanctioned by the general voice, or the ſect would have been excluded from the churches altogether.

[z] It is very common for that aſſembly of the church of Jeruſalem, of which we read in Acts, xv. to be termed the *firſt council;* and if people chooſe ſtill to perſiſt in giving it this denomination, I ſhall certainly not trouble myſelf ſo far as to fall out with them about it. I would wiſh them, however, to underſtand that this is applying the word *council,* in a way altogether inconſiſtent with its true import. The congregation that is ſtated to have met on this occaſion was nothing more than an aſſembly of the members of one individual church, conſiſting of the apoſtles, the elders, and the people. Now if the term council could properly be applied to ſuch an aſſembly as this, it would follow as a neceſſary conſequence that more councils were held in the firſt century than in any ſubſequent one; whereas even the warmeſt advocates for their early origin are ready to admit, that in this age they were not by any means frequent. In fact, it was a moſt common practice in all the churches, at this period, for the members to hold meetings after the manner of that above alluded to as having been convened at Jeruſalem, for the purpoſe of conſulting together, and deliberating on matters relating to religion and divine worſhip: and therefore, if ſuch a meeting is to be termed a council, it may even be ſaid that there were more councils held in the firſt century than in all the ſubſequent ones down to our own time put together. A council, properly ſpeaking, means

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XLIX. In the age of which we are now treating, it was not deemed ſo eſſentially requiſite in a teacher that he ſhould be diſtinguiſhed for profound or extenſive knowledge, either human or divine, as that he ſhould be a man of virtue and probity, and, in addition to a due meaſure of gravity, be poſſeſſed of a certain degree of facility in imparting inſtruction to the ignorant. Had the apoſtles indeed thought otherwiſe, and directed that none but men of letters and erudition ſhould have been elected to the office of preſbyters, it would not have been poſſible for the churches to have complied with ſuch a mandate; ſince, at that time, the number of the wiſe and learned who had embraced the faith of Chriſt was but ſmall, and as it were of no account. The Chriſtian writers of the firſt century conſequently were not many; and from the labours of the few whoſe works have reached us, whether we conſult ſuch as have been handed down whole and entire, or ſuch as carry with

means an aſſembly of ſeveral aſſociated churches, or a congregation of delegates repreſenting a number of churches ſo united, in which the common welfare of the whole is made the ſubject-matter of conſultation; and ſuch things are reſolved on and enacted as may appear to the members conſtituting ſuch aſſembly, or to the major part of them, eligible, and fraught with a promiſe of conducing to the general good. Now, that ſuch an aſſembly as this was even once held in the firſt century, is what I am ſure no one, let him take what pains he may, will ever be able to find in the hiſtory of that age. As the cauſe of Chriſtianity, however, advanced, and its concerns became more extenſive, ſo that the churches compoſing an eccleſiaſtical province aſſumed, as it were, the form of a republic made up of various minor diſtricts, it became neceſſary, in order to preſerve tranquillity and a mutual good underſtanding amongſt them, that ſeveral particulars ſhould be occaſionally diſcuſſed in a general meeting, compoſed of legates or deputies from each.

them

them the marks of interpolation and corruption, it is uniformly evident that, in unfolding the ſacred truths of Chriſtianity to the world, the aſſiſtance of genius, of art, or of human means of any other kind, was but little, if at all, courted. For if the mind of a reader is not to be charmed or wrought upon by ſanctity of ſentiment, ſimplicity of diction, or the effuſions of a genuine unaffected piety, it will be in vain for him to ſeek for either gratification or improvement in the peruſal of the writings to which we allude. All theſe authors, although by no means on a level in point of dignity and judgment, are yet uſually claſſed together under the general title of "the apoſtolic fathers;" alluding, as it ſhould ſeem, to their having converſed with the apoſtles themſelves, or with ſome of their immediate aſſociates, and their works have, in conſequence, been moſt commonly edited together. On this account, it may be the better way perhaps for us to collect here into one view whatever we may judge neceſſary to be known reſpecting them, than to poſtpone any part of it to a ſubſequent period; although Ignatius, Polycarp, and Hermas, rather belong to the ſecond century, as that was the age in which they wrote and died [*a*].

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[*a*] Whatever writings could in any way be aſcribed to the apoſtolic fathers, whether good, bad, or indifferent, were all of them collected together by Jo. Bapt. Cotelerius, a French divine, and publiſhed by him in two volumes, illuſtrated with long and learned notes. This work was afterwards twice re-printed at Amſterdam, with various additions by Jo. Le Clerc. The better part of theſe fathers has alſo been given to the public, but without comment, by Tho. Ittigius, in his *Bibliotheca Patrum Apoſtolicorum*. They have been tranſlated into Engliſh by Wake, archbiſhop of Canterbury; into German, by Gothofred Arnold; and the better part of them into French, by Abr. Ruchat.

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The genuine writings of Clement of Rome.

L. At the head of theſe writers ſtands that Clement who, from his having been biſhop of Rome, is uſually by way of diſtinction ſtyled the Roman; a man of unqueſtionably the higheſt authority, ſince we find other authors, with a view to obtain for their opinions and writings a favourable reception with the public, prefixing to them his name. The common accounts that we have of his life, the incidents by which it was chequered, and the manner of his death, are for the moſt part undeſerving of credit, at leaſt they are by no means well authenticated [*b*]. There are extant two epiſtles of his in Greek, addreſſed to the church of Corinth, at a time when it was diſtracted by inteſtine faction. Of theſe the firſt is generally, and I think not without reaſon, conſidered as indiſputably genuine in the main; although a very ill applied induſtry appears to have been ſubſequently exerciſed upon it by ſome one or other, probably, however, without any evil deſign, in the way of interpola-

[*b*] Vid. Jo. Erneſt Grabe *Spicileg. Patrum Sæc.* i. p. 264; Tillemont *Memoires pour ſervir a l'Hiſtoire de l'Egliſe*, tom. ii. part i. p. 269; Phil. Rondinin. lib. ii. *de S. Clement. Papa et Martyra, ejuſque Baſilica in Urbe Roma*, 1706, 4to. Some time back, when a ſepulchre, bearing the name of Clement, was unexpectedly laid open at Rome, a good deal of diſcuſſion took place amongſt the learned of Italy reſpecting Clemens Romanus. With regard to theſe inveſtigations, however, the wiſeſt and beſt-informed writers do not ſcruple to avow that the hiſtory of this venerable man is involved in great obſcurity; and that ſeveral things, which have been haſtily conſidered as relating to him, belong properly to Flavius Clemens the conſul, who was put to death by Domitian. See the Diſſertations of the Jeſuit Zacharias, and Vitry, which were publiſhed by Angelus Calogera, in his *Opuſc. Scientific.* tom. xxxiii. p. 300. 350, et ſeq.

tion [c]. The authenticity of the latter one has been regarded, even from a very remote period, as ſomewhat queſtionable, though it is not eaſy to ſay on what grounds, ſince there ſeems to be nothing whatever in it that is manifeſtly irreconcileable with what we know of the genius and character of Clement [d]. CENT. I.

Suppoſititious writings of Clement.

LI. In addition to theſe Epiſtles, there have been attributed to Clement the following works: 1. Eight books of *Apoſtolical Conſtitutions*, a

[c] This interpolation was firſt detected by Hieron. Bignonius, who communicated what he had thus remarked in a letter to Grotius. See Cotelerii *Patres Apoſtolici*, tom. i. p. 133, 134. The diſcovery was further proſecuted, not however without caution, by Ed. Bernhard, in ſome annotations of his on Clement, which were publiſhed by Le Clerc in the laſt edition of his *Patres Apoſtolici*. The learned Hen. Wotton, it is true, in his notes on this epiſtle, leaves no means untried to do away this imputation, and to perſuade us that the letter in queſtion has been handed down pure and unvitiated by any ſort of corruption whatever. But the labours of this eminent ſcholar, ſo far from eſtabliſhing his point, may be ſaid to have been completely thrown away; ſince it is as clear as the light itſelf, that there are ſeveral paſſages in this epiſtle altogether irrelevant to the writer's purpoſe, and which hold no ſort of connection or correſpondence with what precedes or follows them: indeed ſome of them are manifeſtly taken from Clement of Alexandria. For my own part, I ſhould think that it might be very poſſible for an attentive and ſkilful perſon to remove from this venerable author's robe, (if I may be allowed to apply the term robe to an epiſtle that has no pretenſions to either learning or eloquence,) theſe patches with which it is at preſent diſfigured; and it appears to me to be a kind of taſk which it might prove well worth the while for any judicious ſcholar to undertake.

[d] A liſt of the different editions of theſe epiſtles that have been publiſhed, is given by Jo. Albert. Fabricius, in his *Biblioth. Græc.* lib. iv. cap. v. p. 175, et ſeq. It does not, however, include the moſt accurate one of all, *viz.* that printed at Cambridge in 1718, in 8vo. by Hen. Wotton, and enriched with various notes and diſſertations of his own, and of ſeveral other learned men.

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work of undoubted antiquity, but, at the ſame time, of uncertain date; the production of an author beyond all meaſure auſtere, and who, as it ſhould ſeem, entertained a thorough contempt for intellectual culture of any kind. The moſt probable origin that we can aſſign to this work is, that ſome aſcetic writer having drawn up a form of church government and diſcipline, upon what he conceived to be apoſtolic maxims, he, in order to gain for it more attention and reſpect, attributed it at once to the apoſtles themſelves, pretending it to have been received direct from them by their diſciple Clement [*e*]. 2. A ſet of *Apoſtolical Canons*, or Eccleſiaſtical Laws, eighty-five in number, which the perſon who framed them wiſhed to be conſidered as having been enacted by the apoſtles, and tranſmitted by them to Clement. It ſhould ſeem to be not at all unlikely that theſe Canons and the above-mentioned Conſtitutions might originate with one and the ſame author. Be that as it may, the matter of this work is unqueſtionably ancient;

[*e*] The various opinions entertained by the learned, reſpecting the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions and Canons, have been collected into one view by Tho. Ittigius, in a diſſertation *de Patribus Apoſtolicis*, prefixed to his *Bibliotheca Patrum Apoſtolicorum*; as alſo by Jo. Franc. Buddeus, in his *Iſagog. in Theologiam*, part ii. cap. v. p. 742, et ſeq. There are likewiſe two learned diſſertations on the ſame ſubject, annexed by Jo. Phil. Baratiere to his work *de Succeſſione Romanor. Epiſcoporum primorum*, p. 229, and 260: the object of one of which is to prove that theſe Conſtitutions are not, as many pretend, interpolated; whilſt that of the other is to make it appear that they were compiled about the beginning of the ſecond century. As to the firſt of theſe points, the generality of people will, I rather think, feel diſpoſed to agree with him; but with regard to the latter, I conceive that his arguments will not be deemed concluſive by many.

ſince

since the manners and discipline of which it exhibits a view are those which prevailed amongst the Christians of the second and third centuries, especially those resident in Greece and the oriental regions [*f*]. With respect to its form, however the work is commonly looked upon as belonging to a more recent age. III. *The Recognitions of Clement*, in ten books. This is a narrative entirely fictitious, but at the same time of an agreeable interesting nature, and of considerable use in bringing us acquainted with the tenets of the Gnostics, and enabling us rightly to comprehend the state of Christian affairs in the age to which it refers. The work professes to be an account of the travels of St. Peter, and his disputes with Simon Magus, the leader of the Gnostics, written by Clement; in reality however it appears to have come from the pen of an Alexandrian Jew, who had but partially embraced Christianity, and still cherished errors of the grossest kind. Considerable hostility is nevertheless manifested by him towards the tenets of the Gnostics, and in some respects he proves himself to be neither a weak nor an unskilful adversary. For some time these Recognitions were known to the public merely through the medium of a Latin translation by Rufinus: we may consider the Greek text as having been first published by Cotelerius in his Patres Apostolici. For although the Clementina, as printed by Cotelerius, differ in many respects from the Recognitions, yet in both the

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[*f*] This has been proved, I think, beyond all controversy by that most able investigator of Christian antiquities, Bishop Beveridge, as well in his annotations on these canons, as in a separate work on this subject, published by him (Lond. 1678, in 4to.) under the title of *Codex Canonum Ecclesiæ primitivæ vindicatus & illustratus.*

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Ignatius and his Epiſtles.

LII. Next after Clement in point of time comes Ignatius, to whom St. Peter himſelf is ſaid to have committed the care and ſuperintendance of the church of Antioch, and who, by command of the emperor Trajan, was delivered over as a prey to wild beaſts in the theatre at Rome [*h*]. There are extant ſeveral Epiſtles with the name of Ignatius prefixed to them; but a queſtion having been made as to their authenticity, a deal of learned and elaborate diſcuſſion has taken place on the ſubject amongſt men of erudition, and the point has been conteſted by them with conſiderable vehemence; ſome aſſerting them to be ſpurious, others

[*g*] Concerning this work (which thoſe who may be induced to conſult it, will find to throw conſiderable light on ſeveral ancient matters and opinions, and to yield more aſſiſtance towards comprehending the myſteries in the diſcipline of Simon Magus and others of the Gnoſtics, than all the other early writers put together) I have ſpoken more at large in my Diſſertation *de turbata per recentiores Platonicos Eccleſia*, § XXXIV. See my *Syntagma Diſſert. ad Hiſt. Eccl. pertin.* vol. i. I do not however conſider myſelf as having, either here or even there, pointed out every ground on which it has a claim to our attention.

[*h*] For a copious account of Ignatius we refer the reader to Tillemont's *Memoires pour ſervir a l'Hiſtoire de l'Egliſe*, tom. ii. p. ii. p. 42. 80. Several others alſo have employed their pens on this ſubject, as may be ſeen in the *Biblioth. Græc.* of Fabricius, lib. v. cap. i. p. 38, where likewiſe the different editions of the Epiſtles of Ignatius are enumerated, and a view is taken of the diſputes amongſt the learned to which they have given riſe.

inſiſting on it that they are genuine [*i*]. The moſt prevailing opinion appears to be that the ſeven which are reputed to have been written by him in the courſe of his journey to Rome, namely thoſe reſpectively addreſſed to the Smyrneans, to Polycarp, to the Epheſians, to the Magneſians, to the Philadelphians, and to the Trallians, as they ſtand in the edition of them publiſhed in the ſeventeenth century, from a manuſcript in the Medicean library at Florence are unqueſtionably genuine: though there are not wanting thoſe who, on account of its diſſimilitude of ſtyle, conſider the authenticity of the Epiſtle to Polycarp as leſs to be depended on than that of the other ſix. As for the reſt

[*i*] But few probably would ever have intereſted themſelves much in this queſtion concerning the genuineneſs of the Epiſtles of Ignatius, had they not been found to favour the cauſe of thoſe who contend for the divine origin and great antiquity of epiſcopal government. But the Preſbyterians as they are termed, and thoſe amongſt us who are for doing away every thing of which the teachers of the church might avail themſelves, in order to maintain a diſtinction between themſelves and the people, perceiving this, have attacked theſe Letters with all the warmth of party ſpirit, and occaſionally ſuffered themſelves to be betrayed into ſo much violence on the ſubject, as rather to leſſen their own credit than that of the Epiſtles in the eyes of a judicious reader. The Epiſcopalians have alſo, not unfrequently, run into the ſame fault; and in their eagerneſs to prove a want of penetration and judgment in their adverſaries, have ſhewn a deficiency of candour and liberality in themſelves. For my own part, I cannot perceive that it would be of any great conſequence to either party to obtain the victory in this caſe; ſince it by no means appears to me that the cauſe of epiſcopacy is ſo far dependent on theſe Epiſtles for ſupport, as that it muſt ſtand or fall accordingly as they may be adjudged to be either genuine or ſpurious. But the conduct of even our greateſt ſcholars may, in ſome inſtances, be ſaid to reſemble that of advocates in courts of law, who frequently contend with more aſperity and earneſtneſs for minor or collateral points, than for the principal matter in diſpute.

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of theſe Epiſtles, of which no mention whatever is made by any of the early Chriſtian writers, they are commonly rejected as altogether ſpurious. The diſtinction thus generally recognized in favour of the abovementioned particular letters, is grounded on reaſons of no little force and weight, but at the ſame time they are not of ſuch a concluſive nature as to ſilence all objection: on the contrary, a regard for truth requires it to be acknowledged, that ſo conſiderable a degree of obſcurity hangs over the queſtion reſpecting the authenticity of not only a part, but the whole of the Epiſtles aſcribed to Ignatius, as to render it altogether a caſe of much intricacy and doubt [*k*].

LIII. The

[*k*] That the ſix or ſeven letters above pointed out have in them ſomewhat of a genuine caſt is, I think, unqueſtionable, and rendered particularly manifeſt by (amongſt others) Biſhop Pearſon in his *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*, a work of great excellence, and replete with profound learning. As to the quantity however of what may thus be conſidered as authentic, I muſt confeſs myſelf unable to determine. There are extant, as is well known, two editions of the Epiſtles aſcribed to Ignatius; the one an ancient one, and the more comprehenſive of the two; the other, that which was publiſhed in the 17th century, firſt of all by Iſaac Voſſius, and afterwards by Sir Thomas Smith, from the Medicean manuſcript, and in which are not to be found ſeveral things that are contained in the former. Of theſe editions the latter has, in general, the preference given to it by thoſe of the preſent day who wiſh to uphold the authority of Ignatius, inaſmuch as it accords better with the tenets and opinions now generally prevalent in the Chriſtian church than the other, in which ſome paſſages and expreſſions occur which cannot well be defended or reconciled with what are commonly deemed orthodox ſentiments reſpecting God and the Saviour of mankind. This is not however conſidered as by any means a ſatisfactory reaſon for rejecting the other edition by ſome, who with truth remark, that prior to the exiſtence of controverſies in the church, its members appear to have allowed themſelves conſiderable latitude both in thinking and ſpeaking, and that conſequently the rules of expreſſion to which we

LIII. The Epiſtle to the Philippians, which is attributed to Polycarp, biſhop of Smyrna, who had

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we of the preſent day find it neceſſary to confine ourſelves, muſt not be too ſtrictly applied as a ſtandard whereby to judge of any thing that may occur in the writings of the early Chriſtians. There are therefore not wanting thoſe who conſider the more ancient and fuller edition as the beſt; amongſt whom we may mention Jo. Morin (*de ſacr. Ordinat.* p. iii. exerc. iii. cap. iii.) and W. Whiſton: the latter of whom, in a work printed at London, 1610, in 8vo. endeavours to prove that Athanaſius contrived to get every thing which ſeemed to militate againſt the Nicene dogma concerning the exiſtence of three perſons in one God, to be expunged from the Epiſtles of Ignatius, leſt the tenets of himſelf and his aſſociates might appear not to be in uniſon with the ſentiments of ſo reſpectable a writer. As for what Whiſton would thus inſinuate reſpecting Athanaſius, it is unqueſtionably to be regarded as nothing more than one of thoſe dreams of fancy by which men are ſometimes led aſtray, when they pay more attention to the ſuggeſtions of their own imagination than to the dictates of right reaſon; but it muſt at the ſame time be acknowledged that the opinion entertained by him, in common with other learned men, that a preference ought to be given to the more ancient and fuller edition of the Ignatian Epiſtles, although it may be queſtioned and oppoſed, can yet by no means be wholly ſet aſide, or proved to have no foundation in truth. Le Clerc has attacked this opinion with no little force, in an expreſs diſſertation annexed to the laſt edition of the *Patres Apoſtolici*, tom. ii. p. 501, & ſeq.; as has alſo Wotton in the preface to his edition of the Epiſtles of Clement, p. clxxxv. & ſeq.; but ſhould any one be inclined to enter the liſts in defence of the oppoſite ſide of the queſtion, he will not have far to ſeek for a reply. To me it appears not at all impoſſible that the longer epiſtles ſhould have been curtailed or epitomized by ſome one or other; and it might, in my opinion, therefore be urged with ſome ſhew of reaſon, that the ſhorter epiſtles publiſhed by Voſſius are merely an abridgment of the longer ones, made by ſome unknown perſon, who was probably apprehenſive leſt any looſe and incautious expreſſions of Ignatius might prove of detriment to the orthodox belief reſpecting the divine Trinity. But to whichſoever edition we may give the preference, we ſhall never, under the preſent circumſtances, let us endeavour what we

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had been one of St. John's diſciples, and who, about the middle of the ſecond century, ſuffered martyrdom at a very advanced age, has merely a queſtionable claim to credit; in conſequence of which it is regarded by ſome as ſpurious, though others conſider it to be genuine [*l*]. The Epiſtle

may, be able to exonerate theſe letters from all ſuſpicion of corruption and interpolation. Upon the whole, it appears to me, that this great controverſy reſpecting the Epiſtles of Ignatius, although it has occupied the attention and talents of ſo many eminent men, remains as yet undecided, nor do I think that it can ever be ſatisfactorily determined, unleſs further light ſhould be acquired by a diſcovery of ſome more ancient copies, or of ſome more explicit early authorities than thoſe we are already in poſſeſſion of on the ſubject. The letters themſelves, come from what pen they may, are indiſputably of very ancient date; and that they are not altogether a forgery is in the higheſt degree credible: but to aſcertain with preciſion the exact extent to which they may be conſidered as genuine, appears to me to be beyond the reach of all human penetration.

[*l*] A liſt of authors who have written particularly reſpecting Polycarp, is given by Jo. Alb. Fabricius in his *Bibliotheca Græca*, lib. v. cap. i. p. 47, & ſeq. The moſt diſtinguiſhed of theſe is Tillemont, whoſe diligence has never been ſurpaſſed by either of the others. See his *Memoires pour ſervir a l'Hiſtoire de l'Egliſe*, tom. ii. p. ii. p. 287, & ſeq. The year and month of this father's death have been made the ſubject of particular diſcuſſion by (amongſt others) Baratier, in his work *de Succeſſione Romanorum Pontificum*, and the Abbé Longerue, in a diſſertation *de Anno Macedonum*, which is to be found in J. D. Winckler's *Sylloge Anecdotorum*, p. 18. 25. But ſince the grounds and arguments relied on in this diſcuſſion, are chiefly drawn from the Greek Epiſtle of the church of Smyrna reſpecting the death of Polycarp, firſt publiſhed by Biſhop Uſher, it appears to me that very great doubt and uncertainty muſt continue ſtill to hang over the point. For whoever will attentively conſider that Epiſtle, and compare it with what is given us from it by Euſebius in his *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory*, lib. iv. cap. xv. cannot fail to perceive that it has been corrupted and interpolated by ſome weak and ſuperſtitious perſon, who, in his endeavours to multiply miracles, deſcends even to trifling, and occaſionally falls into the abſurdity of diſagreeing with himſelf.

that

that has come down to us with the name of Barnabas affixed to it, and which conſiſts of two parts, the one compriſing proofs of the divinity of the Chriſtian religion derived from the books of the Old Teſtament, the other, a collection of moral precepts, is unqueſtionably a compoſition of great antiquity, but we are left in uncertainty as to its author. For as to what is ſuggeſted by ſome, of its having been written by that Barnabas who was the friend and companion of St. Paul, the futility of ſuch a notion is eaſily to be made apparent from the letter itſelf; ſeveral of the opinions and interpretations of Scripture which it contains, having in them ſo little of either truth, dignity, or force, as to render it impoſſible that they could ever have proceeded from the pen of a man divinely inſtructed [*m*].

LIV. The

[*m*] With regard to Barnabas and his Epiſtle, the reader may conſult, amongſt other works, Fabricii *Biblioth. Græc.* lib. iv. cap. v. § xiv. p. 173, and lib. v. cap. i. § iv. p. 3. Thom. Ittigii *Select. Hiſtor. Eccleſ. Capit.* ſæc. i. c. i. §. xiv. p. 20.—Baſnage, in his *Hiſtoire des Juifs*, tom. iii. cap. xxvi. p. 558, has pointed out and corrected ſome of the more flagrant errors of this writer, but not all. For he has adopted many, and that too in things with regard to which it would have been eaſy for him to have obtained more accurate information. With reſpect to the real origin of this letter, I do not, for my own part, ſee any juſt grounds for believing it to have been written by ſome artful man, who, the more readily to gain readers and proſelytes, introduced it to the world as an Epiſtle of Barnabas the companion of St. Paul. In fact I can perceive nothing whatever that ſhould lead one even to ſuſpect a thing of the kind: and the opinion therefore to which I incline is, that ſome Jew of the name of Barnabas, a man, as it ſhould ſeem, not wanting in piety, but of a weak and ſuperſtitious character, being actuated by a wiſh to forward to the utmoſt of his ability amongſt his brethren the cauſe of that moſt holy religion to which he had himſelf become a convert, drew up and ſent out into the world this Epiſtle, but that the early

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LIV. The liſt of apoſtolical fathers cloſes with Hermas, a writer of the ſecond century, who, according to early authorities, was brother to Pius biſhop of Rome [*n*]. His book, which is now known

Chriſtians, led away by a name for which they entertained the higheſt reverence, attributed it at once to that Barnabas who was the friend and companion of St. Paul.

[*n*] Amongſt the learned there have not been wanting ſome, who, from a wiſh to exalt the character and authority of Hermas, the author of "The Shepherd," the writer to whom we here allude, have ſtrained every nerve to perſuade us that he was a different perſon from that Hermas whom ancient authors ſpeak of as having been brother to Pius, biſhop of Rome. What they maintain is, that the author of "The Shepherd," was either that Hermas ſpoken of by St. Paul in Rom. xvi. 14.; or if this ſhould not appear to be probable, ſtill that he was a very ancient writer, who lived in the time of Clement of Rome, and before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; a poſition which muſt at once fall to the ground, were it to be admitted that "The Shepherd" was written by the brother of Pius, biſhop of Rome, ſince the Romiſh ſee was filled by no one of that name until the ſecond century. No one has diſplayed greater learning in defence of this point, or entered into it more fully, than Juſt. Fontaninus: vid. *Hiſtor. Literar. Aquilienſ.* lib. ii. cap. i. p. 63, & ſeq. But notwithſtanding all that has been urged by him and others, it is moſt clearly manifeſt that the early writers who make mention of Hermas, the brother of Pius, underſtood him to be one and the ſame with that Hermas who was the author of "The Shepherd." To me it appears impoſſible for any one to doubt this who will attentively conſider the following paſſage in the verſes againſt Marcion, to be found amongſt Tertullian's works, lib. iii. cap. ix. p. 366, edit. Venet.; and which, if wrongly attributed to Tertullian, were yet certainly written by ſome very ancient author:

> "*Jamque loco nono cathedram ſuſcepit Hyginus,*
> *Poſt hunc deinde Pius, Hermas cui germine frater*
> *Angelicus Paſtor, quia tradita verba loquutus.*"

Now the opinion of learned men with regard to this paſſage has been, that Hermas is here ſtyled an *angelic paſtor*, that is a teacher rivalling the angels, and poſſeſſed of angelic excellence.

known to the world merely through the medium of a Latin translation, was originally written in Greek,

excellence. But that this is a mistake is evident from the context,—*quia tradita verba loquutus.* For supposing the above opinion to be just, we have here the reason assigned for the writer's applying to Hermas the title of *Angelic Pastor:* but who, let me ask, can possibly see in these words even the shadow of a reason to justify the appellation? Could the circumstance of his having spoken *tradita verba*, or "words transmitted from above," give Hermas a claim to the title of *Angelic Pastor?* If it did, the title is certainly not due to him alone, but belongs also to every sound Christian preacher; for all such men teach and speak words which came from God himself, and were commanded by him to be put in writing. The more natural conclusion then is, that it is not to Hermas that the magnificent title of Angelic Pastor has relation in this passage, but to some other person; nor does there appear to me to be the least difficulty whatever in immediately pointing that other person out. Not a question, as it strikes me, can exist but that the appellation refers to the work called "the Shepherd," which was written by Hermas, and in the second and third book of which an angelic pastor or shepherd is introduced as communicating to the author what is there recorded: and what Tertullian meant to intimate, in my opinion, undoubtedly was, that the Hermas of whom he spake was the same with him to whom an angel, under the form and garb of a shepherd, had communicated and explained certain mandates from above. If the common reading indeed of this passage be retained, I am ready to allow that the sense which I would thus annex to it may appear to be not altogether obvious or plain: but it will not admit of a doubt that this reading is corrupt. Even those who may be against me as to the above interpretation of the passage must yet allow this to be the fact: for as the words stand at present, it is impossible to annex to them any sense whatever. The correction I should propose would be, to transfer the comma which follows the word *pastor*, back to the word *frater* at the close of the preceding line, and to exchange the particle *quia* in the third line for the pronoun *cui:*

"————*Hermas cui germine frater,*
Angelicus Pastor cui tradita verba loquutus."

Corrected in this way the passage at once loses its obscurity, and

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Greek, and is entitled "*The Shepherd*," the principal character introduced in it being that of an

and becomes in every reſpect clear and intelligible. "Pius," ſays Tertullian, "has a natural brother called Hermas: I mean the perſon of that name who enjoyed the rare felicity of receiving from the mouth of an angelic paſtor, or angel who aſſumed the form and guiſe of a ſhepherd, words tranſmitted from the Deity himſelf." That I ſhould point to a variety of paſſages in the writings of other ancient authors, which explicitly corroborate the teſtimony of Tertullian in this reſpect, by attributing "the Shepherd" to that Hermas who was the brother of Pius, is, I conceive, not by any means neceſſary. For there was fortunately brought to light, ſome few years ſince, a work of unqueſtionable authority, the production of an author cotemporary with Hermas, and containing a paſſage which places it beyond all diſpute that the book which we have extant under the title of "the Shepherd" was written in the ſecond century, by the brother of Pius biſhop of Rome. It is a fragment (the exordium being wanting) of a ſmall work concerning the canon of the holy Scriptures, and was publiſhed by L. Ant. Muratori, in his *Antiquitates Ital. Med. Ævi*, tom. iii. diſſ. xliii. p. 853, & ſeq. The author of it is unknown. Muratori attributes it to Caius, a preſbyter of the church of Rome, who lived in the latter part of the ſecond century; but the point is by no means placed beyond doubt. Of this however we are certain, from the evidence of the book itſelf, that the author, whoever he might be, compiled it in the ſecond century, and during the time when Hermas was alive. In this very valuable fragment we meet with the following teſtimony reſpecting Hermas, the author of "the Shepherd": "*Paſtorem vero* nuperrime temporibus noſtris *in urbe Roma* Herma *conſcripſit, ſedente cathedra urbis Romæ Eccleſiæ* Pio *epiſcopo* fratre ejus.—Nothing ſurely can be more explicit than this; and there is conſequently no room left for further diſpute amongſt the learned reſpecting either the age, the kindred, or the condition of Hermas. To this paſſage ſucceeds another no leſs worthy of remark, ſince it brings us acquainted with the degree of eſtimation in which Hermas was held as a writer by the Latin church. The conſtruction of the paragraph is indeed not the moſt elegant imaginable, but it nevertheleſs leaves us in no doubt as to the fact, that the writings of Hermas were not included within the canon of ſacred Scriptures: *Et ideo legi eum quidem oportet*,

an angel who had aſſumed the form and garb of a ſhepherd, and who under this diſguiſe becomes the

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oportet, ſe publicare vero in eccleſia populo, neque inter prophetas completum numero, neque inter apoſtolos in finem temporum poteſt. "The Shepherd," ſays this writer, "may properly enough be peruſed by pious perſons in private, but it is not a work fit to be read publicly in aſſemblies of the church, or deſerving of being claſſed with the writings of either the prophets or the apoſtles."—The juſt diſcrimination exhibited in this paſſage reflects no little honour on the Latin churches, inaſmuch as it proves them to have been more diſcreet and cautious in their judgment than the Greeks were, who for the moſt part regarded Hermas as an author not inferior to the prophets and apoſtles. Hermas himſelf, as I ſhall preſently take occaſion to ſhew, was unqueſtionably deſirous of having a place aſſigned him amongſt the ſacred writers: but the teachers of the Latin, and eſpecially the Roman churches, notwithſtanding they were told that his book contained the diſcourſes of an angel and the church, and that the precepts therein delivered were the very words of God himſelf, notwithſtanding alſo that they knew the author was brother to Pius the Roman pontiff, as we ſhould now call him, yet would they not ſuffer themſelves to be impoſed upon, but candidly and boldly affirmed, that neither the viſions of Hermas, nor the diſcourſes of his angelic inſtructor, were entitled to any credit. Out of reſpect, as I conceive, to the brother of a man of conſiderable authority, and a Roman biſhop, they did not go the length of prohibiting the uſe of the book altogether, but permitted it to be peruſed with a view to pious edification in private; they however would not conſent to its being read in public to the people. It muſt indeed be acknowledged that the Latin, and eſpecially the Roman Chriſtians, manifeſted from the firſt a greater degree of circumſpection and prudence in drawing the line between ſuch writings as were really and truly the fruit of divine inſpiration and ſuch as falſely pretended to that character, than thoſe of Greece and the oriental regions, whoſe precipitancy was ſuch, that, had their judgment been made the criterion, the canon of the New Teſtament would have come down to us by far more bulky in ſize than it is at preſent, and diſgraced by writings which are now by common conſent regarded as apocryphal. Whilſt we are on the ſubject, I will add a word or two reſpecting the reaſon which ſome of the learned aſſign

as

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the inſtrument of conveying to Hermas inſtruction and admonition from above. The object of this author evidently was, to impreſs the world with a belief that his book was not the offspring of any human underſtanding or talents, but that whatever it contained had been derived either from God himſelf or from the abovementioned angelic ſhepherd. But there is ſuch an admixture of folly and ſuperſtition with piety, ſuch a ridiculous aſſociation of the moſt egregious nonſenſe with things momentous and uſeful, not only in the celeſtial viſions which conſtitute the ſubſtance of his firſt book, but alſo in the precepts and parables which are put into the mouth of the angel in the two others, as to render it a matter of aſtoniſhment that men of learning ſhould ever have thought of giving Hermas a

as chiefly inducing them to conſider the author of the work now extant under the title of "the Shepherd" and Hermas, who was brother to Pius, as having been two different perſons. In the *Liber pontificalis* and ſome other ancient writings, there is a paſſage cited reſpecting the celebration of Eaſter, from a book called "the Shepherd," written by Hermas, the brother of Pius, but which is no where to be found in the work that has reached us under that title. See Jo. Alb. Fabricii *Codex Apocryphus Novi. Teſtam.* tom. iii. p. 761. Hence they infer that the Shepherd written by Hermas, the brother of Pius, was a different book from the Shepherd that we are in poſſeſſion of. But this way of reaſoning, although it might be fair enough if the work were extant in the original Greek, and we were certain that it had come down to us entire, will yet by no means hold good under the exiſting circumſtances, ſince the work is known to us merely through a Latin tranſlation, and it is far from being impoſſible that this tranſlation ſhould be incomplete. To me it appears not at all unlikely that thoſe of the Greek and oriental Chriſtians, who were ſtyled *Quartadecimans*, might expunge from "the Shepherd" the paſſage above alluded to reſpecting the time of keeping Eaſter, inaſmuch as it militated againſt the opinion which they themſelves entertained on the ſubject.

place

place amongſt the inſpired writers. To me it appears clear that he muſt have been either a wild diſordered fanatic, or elſe, as is more likely, a man who, by way of more readily drawing the attention of his brethren to certain maxims and precepts which he deemed juſt and ſalutary, conceived himſelf to be warranted in pretending to have derived them from converſations with God and the angels [o]

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LV. That

[o] Several things, which I cannot well enter into in this place, conſpire to impreſs me with the opinion that Hermas could never have been ſo far the dupe of an overheated imagination, as to fancy that he ſaw and heard things which in reality had no exiſtence, but that he knowingly and wilfully was guilty of a cheat, and invented thoſe divine converſations and viſions which he aſſerts himſelf to have enjoyed, with a view to obtain a more ready reception for certain precepts and admonitions which he conceived would prove ſalutary to the Roman church. At the time when he wrote, it was an eſtabliſhed maxim with many of the Chriſtians, that it was pardonable in an advocate for religion to avail himſelf of fraud and deception, if it were likely that they might conduce towards the attainment of any conſiderable good. Of the hoſt of ſilly books and ſtories to which this erroneous notion gave riſe from the ſecond to the fifteenth century, no one who is acquainted with Chriſtian hiſtory can be ignorant. The teachers of the Roman church themſelves appear to me to have conſidered Hermas as having written his work upon this principle, and not to have altogether diſapproved of it. For as we have ſeen above, they permitted his book to be circulated and peruſed, with a view to pious edification in private, but would not allow it to be read publicly in the aſſemblies of the church. From their refuſal of the latter it may fairly be inferred, that they did not regard the viſions of Hermas, or the precepts and advice of the angel with whom he pretended to have converſed, in the light of divine communications: but their acquieſcing in the former, very plainly ſhews, that the kind of fiction to which this author had recourſe, appeared to them to be ſuch as was warrantable, and that they did not think it unjuſtifiable to practiſe impoſition on the multitude in the way of inſtruction, or to invent pious

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pious ſtories for the ſake of more readily commanding their attention. Had they believed Hermas to have written under the influence of divine inſpiration, they would not have dared to deny his work a place amongſt the ſacred writings, and pronounce it unfit to be read in public: but on the other hand, had they felt indignant at the cheat practiſed by him, or diſapproved of the guile to which he had recourſe, they unqueſtionably would never have recommended the peruſal of his work to Chriſtians in private, as uſeful and likely to confirm their piety. That Hermas himſelf, however, was deſirous of having a place aſſigned him amongſt the inſpired writers, and to have his work read in the public aſſemblies of the Chriſtians as the writings of the prophets and apoſtles were, is plain from what occurs at the end of the ſecond viſion in his firſt book, (edit. Fabrician. p. 791.) The church, which he repreſents as having appeared to him under the form of an aged matron, is there made to enquire, *Si jam libellum dediſſet ſenioribus?*—"If he had yet given his book to the elders?" meaning the preſbyters of the Roman church. His reply is in the negative, *adhuc non.* Hearing this, the church thus continues: *Bene feciſti: habeo enim quædam verba edicere tibi. Cum autem conſummavero omnia verba, aperte ſcientur ab electis.* Admirably well obſerved indeed! The meaning of theſe words as is unqueſtionably proved by what ſubſequently occurs is nothing leſs than this: "After I ſhall have finiſhed what I have in charge to communicate to thee from above, the book muſt be ſent to all the Chriſtian churches, and be read publicly therein, that no one may be ignorant of the divine will." We ſhall add what follows, as it moſt clearly evinces not only the deceit of the man, but alſo that he had the arrogance to aſpire at being aſſociated with the ſacred writers. *Scribes ergo duos libellos, & mittes unum Clementi, & unum Graptæ. Mittet autem Clemens in exteras civitates: illi enim permiſſum eſt. Grapte autem commonebit viduas & orphanos. Tu autem leges in hac civitate cum ſenioribus qui præſunt eccleſiæ.* The Clement here ſpoken of muſt without doubt have been a man of the higheſt authority, ſince the power is attributed to him of ſending round, and recommending to the foreign churches, ſuch writings as might appear to be the fruit of inſpiration; and he could conſequently be none other than that Clement whom, by way of diſtinction, we uſually ſtyle "the Roman:" for ſuch

tian churches, or that errors of no ſmall moment ſhould have been engendered by ſome of them, can

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ſuch pre-eminence and authority was never poſſeſſed by any one elſe of that name amongſt the early Chriſtians. The commentators on Hermas therefore are, in my opinion, right in conſidering him as the perſon here meant. Clement it is pretended was, at the time when Hermas wrote, abſent from the Roman church over which he preſided. For it was well known, that although that church was the principal and more immediate object of his care, yet that he frequently made excurſions to the neighbouring cities, with a view to extend and ſtrengthen the intereſts of the Chriſtian community, the duties appertaining to his office in the church of Rome being, during his abſence, committed to the elders. The book then was to be ſent to him at ſome no very diſtant city where he was ſtaying, and he was to circulate it amongſt all the other churches of Italy, by whom he was looked up to as a father, and give directions for its being read in their public aſſemblies. The object of this author therefore, who in fact wrote long after the death of Clement, namely under the pontificate of Pius, about the middle of the ſecond century, evidently was to render the inſpiration of his work leſs queſtionable, by making it appear as if it had been written at an earlier period, and during the life-time of Clement. This circumſtance muſt of itſelf ſurely be enough to convince every one that the man acted on the principle of deception, and had it in view to take advantage of the ſimplicity of his Chriſtian countrymen. In the Roman church, to which he himſelf belonged, a copy of the book was to be handed to the elders, to whom the regulation of all ſacred matters was committed during the abſence of Clement, in order that they might direct it to be read publicly to the people in their ſolemn aſſemblies. But even this was not deemed ſufficient. Recollecting that the widows oppreſſed with age and infirmities, and the children as yet unbaptized, would not be preſent at thoſe aſſemblies, he took care to provide for another copy being ſent to Grapta, a woman who officiated as a deaconeſs, for the purpoſe of being read to the widows and orphans. As we have touched on the ſubject, it may not be amiſs juſt to remark by the way, that ſome little light appears to be thrown by this paſſage on the duties appertaining to the office of the deaconeſſes, inaſmuch as it ſeems plainly to ſhew that they were entruſted with the inſtruction and ordering of the feeble

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can occaſion no very great ſurpriſe to any one who ſhall reflect on the nature of their conſtitution, and the ſituation of things in the age of which we are treating. For the Chriſtian fraternity was at this period compoſed in part of Jews and partly of Gentile worſhippers, *i. e.* of people altogether differing from each other both in their opinions and manners; and of whom the former could by no means be induced to renounce their attachment to the law of Moſes whilſt Jeruſalem was in exiſtence, nor could the latter, without the greateſt difficulty, prevail on themſelves to endure with any becoming degree of moderation the ſuperſtition and imbecility of the Jews. Aſſociated with theſe were alſo others of a middle claſs, who had either unconditionally embraced the maxims of the oriental philoſophy reſpecting the nature of matter, the origin of this world, the conjunction of ethereal ſpirits with terreſtrial bodies, and their expected future deliverance, or had elſe eſpouſed them under certain modifications deduced from the principles of the Jewiſh religion. And from any of theſe no other conditions had been exacted previouſly to their being received into the Chriſtian community by baptiſm, than that they ſhould ſolemnly profeſs

women and the children. Upon the whole, it is manifeſt that Hermas wiſhed to make the Chriſtians of Rome believe that his book had been conſidered as of the number of inſpired writings, and been read in public during the time of their highly venerated and holy paſtor Clement, and that conſequently they themſelves might, without heſitation, beſtow upon him a ſimilar honour. But to be brief. The Paſtor of Hermas is a fictitious work, of much the ſame kind with what are termed the Clementina and the Recognitions of Clement. In its plan however it is ſomewhat inferior to theſe, as inſtead of mortal characters converſing, we have the Deity himſelf, and his miniſters or angels introduced on the ſcene.

a belief

a belief in Chriſt as the Lord and Saviour of the human race, and declare themſelves to be deſirous of leading an innocent and holy life for the future, agreeably to his commands. Nothing like a regular courſe of preparatory inſtitution had been gone through, no formal examination as to principles or opinions had taken place, no pains had been uſed even to root out from the minds of the converts any erroneous notions which they might have conceived or imbibed. In fact, a naked faith was all that in this infancy of the Chriſtian church was required of any who were deſirous of being admitted within its pale. A fuller and more perfect inſight into its doctrines was left to be acquired in the courſe of time. That amongſt men of this deſcription then, allied cloſely indeed in point of moral worth and ſanctity of demeanor, but at the ſame time differing widely from each other as to various matters of opinion, there ſhould have occaſionally ariſen ſome diſputes and controverſies, was a circumſtance ſo much within the ordinary courſe of things, as ſurely to yield no ground whatever for ſurpriſe. CENT. I.

LVI. The firſt controverſy by which the peace of the church appears to have been diſturbed, was that which was kindled in the church of Antioch by certain Jews, who conceiving that the ceremonial law promulgated by Moſes was deſigned to be of perpetual duration, and that the obſervance of it was conſequently neceſſary to ſalvation, contended that its ordinances ought to complied with even by thoſe of the Gentiles who had been converted to Chriſtianity [p]. Being unable to come to any agreement as to this point

The firſt controverſy reſpecting the neceſſity of obſerving the law of Moſes.

[p] Acts xv. 1. & ſeq.

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amongſt themſelves, the Chriſtians of Antioch deputed Paul and Barnabas to conſult with the apoſtles on the ſubject. The latter, having ſubmitted the matter to the conſideration of the church of Jeruſalem, the controverſy was at length, with the general conſent, put an end to by them in the following way, namely, that ſuch of the Chriſtian converts as were of the Jewiſh nation ſhould be at liberty to conform themſelves to the Moſaic ritual, but that thoſe of every other deſcription ſhould not be conſidered as under any obligation whatever to comply with the ceremonies of the Jewiſh law. Leſt the minds of the Jewiſh converts, however, ſhould be too far alienated from the Gentile brethren, it was required of the latter to abſtain from thoſe things which were regarded as polluting and abominable by the Jews, namely, from partaking of thoſe feaſts which it was uſual for pagan worſhippers to prepare from the victims offered to their falſe gods, and from joining in the obſcene libidinous indulgences with which the celebration of theſe feaſts was in general accompanied, as likewiſe from blood and the fleſh of animals ſtrangled [*q*].

LVII. Con-

[*q*] It is common for us to term the aſſembly in which this controverſy was ſettled, the firſt Chriſtian council, and to conſider it as the original or prototype of all the councils of after ages. Nay there are many who will go even farther, and maintain that the divine right of councils is to be proved from this aſſembly. "The apoſtles," ſay they, "by calling together the church of Jeruſalem on this occaſion, had it in view to point out to poſterity, that controverſies reſpecting religion were to be ſubmitted to the cognizance and deciſion of councils." But the truth of the matter is, that we have learnt to think and ſpeak thus from the friends to the papacy, who, after ſearching the Scriptures in vain for ſomething that might eſtabliſh the divine authority of councils,

LVII. Conſtantly bearing in mind the decree which he had thus received from the mouths of the

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councils, were at length conſtrained to lay hold on this convocation of the church of Jeruſalem by the apoſtles, as on a ſheet anchor or laſt hope. For my own part, I ſee no particular objection to any one's giving the denomination of a council to this aſſembly if he think fit; ſince it was anciently uſual for any lawful aſſembly to be termed a council; and it can be ſhewn by many examples, that a meeting of merely the teachers of a ſingle individual church was frequently ſo ſtyled. Vid. J. Gothofred *ad Codicem Theodoſianum*, tom. vi. p. 28. ed. Ritterian. But as to thoſe meetings of the heads of the church which have been, from time to time, held ſubſequently to the ſecond century, and which are properly termed councils, the aſſembly at Jeruſalem, to which we allude, bears no reſemblance whatever to them, and it is conſequently idle for any one to think of deducing the origin of ſuch conventions from that ſource. This want of reſemblance is admitted by the acute and ingenious father Paul Sarpi, himſelf a Romaniſt, in his *Hiſtory of the Council of Trent*, ſee lib. ii. p. 240. of the French tranſlation of it by Courayer: but it at the ſame time appeared to him that he had hit upon a circumſtance which would bear him out in maintaining, that the aſſembly at Jeruſalem might ſtill, in the ſtrict ſenſe of the term, be ſtyled a council; and this was, that not only the apoſtles, the elders, and the brethren of Jeruſalem, but alſo Paul and Barnabas, the deputies from the church of Antioch, are ſtated to have ſpoken therein. The title of "the firſt Council," he therefore thought might very juſtly be continued to this meeting. But ſurely it is ſcarcely poſſible for any reaſoning to be weaker than this. Did it indeed appear that the deputies from Antioch had voted, or ſat as judges in this aſſembly, in the ſame way as the elders of Jeruſalem did, the argument might not be altogether deſtitute of force: but inſtead of this being the caſe, it is evident that they pretended to nothing beyond the character of deputies, and left the determination of the point wholly to the apoſtles and the other members of the church of Jeruſalem. Speak they undoubtedly did, and it was neceſſary that they ſhould ſpeak; but it was not in the way of offering any opinion of their own as to the matter in queſtion that they did ſo. In addition to this it is to be remarked, that the point in diſpute was not reſolved in this aſſembly by the number of votes, as was the cuſtom in

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the apoſtles themſelves at Jeruſalem, we find St. Paul not only making it his endeavour, both in the

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councils, but was determined ſolely by the judgment of the apoſtles. Had the ſuffrages been taken, it was poſſible that of the two opinions the wrong one might have prevailed: for a greater part of the Chriſtians of Jeruſalem were ſtrongly attached to the Moſaic law, and contended warmly for its authority in this very aſſembly. But, by the ſpeeches of Peter and James, an end was put to all diſſenſions, and a mode of determination ſuggeſted to which the multitude deemed it incumbent on them to make no oppoſition. We have not, therefore, here any thing in the leaſt reſembling a council: for the deciſion, it is plain, was not that of the church of Jeruſalem, but of the apoſtles, by the interpoſition of whoſe opinion an end was at once put to the doubts and diſputes of the church. Viewing the matter in this light, I find myſelf unable altogether to fall in with the opinion expreſſed on the ſubject by Juſt. Hen. Boehmer, in his *Diſſert. Juris Eccleſ. Antiqui*, diſſ. iii. § lxxi. p. 218, and elſewhere, who would conſider the deciſion of this aſſembly in the light of an award, as the lawyers term it, conceiving the church of Antioch *per modum compromiſſi cauſſam controverſam deciſioni apoſtolorum & matricis eccleſiæ ſubmiſiſſe*. It ſhould ſeem not improbable that the original author of this opinion might be father Paul Sarpi himſelf, as we meet with it in his *Hiſtory of the Council of Trent*, lib. ii. p. 240, though expreſſed there but ſhortly, and with ſome reſerve. But to me it appears that, in the firſt place, there is no foundation for what he ſets out with aſſuming, namely, that the Chriſtians of Antioch referred the determination of their controverſy, not to the apoſtles only, but alſo to the whole church of Jeruſalem. For it is moſt clearly manifeſt, from the ſtatement of St. Luke, Acts xv. 2, that the perſons referred to as judges on this occaſion were ſolely the apoſtles and the elders, the latter of whom were well known to be of the number of thoſe who enjoyed divine illumination in common with the apoſtles, and not the whole congregation of Chriſtians reſident at Jeruſalem. The apoſtles and preſbyters, it is true, when they were about to inveſtigate and determine the queſtion by which the church of Antioch was divided, convoked an aſſembly of the people; but their doing ſo was a matter of diſcretion, not of neceſſity: for had they choſen it, they might, from the power that was given them of God, have proceeded of themſelves

the churches of which he was the immediate founder, and likewiſe in thoſe to which he addreſſed

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ſelves to decide the point in diſpute, in the abſence of the people, and without in the leaſt conſulting them: of the exerciſe of which power by them we have a ſtriking inſtance afforded us, in their checking the diſpoſition which the people diſcovered to run into parties, and pointing out in what way the affair ſhould be determined. In the next place, and which is to me an objection of ſtill greater force, the apoſtles muſt, if this opinion be adopted, be conſidered merely in the light of referees or arbitrators, elected at the will of the contending parties, for the purpoſe of ſettling their diſpute: whereas they had been conſtituted judges of all controverſies like this, reſpecting religion, by divine appointment; and it was, therefore, not left to the option of the Chriſtians of Antioch, whether they would refer the determination of their diſpute to them or not. In a caſe like theirs, they were enjoined by nothing leſs than divine authority to have recourſe to the tribunal of the apoſtles. Laſtly, the very words themſelves in which the decree, in this caſe, is conceived, forbid us to view it in the light of an award or judgment of arbitrators indifferently appointed by the parties. For it is not in terms of their own that the apoſtles make this decree, but what they ordain is expreſsly ſtated to be ſo done by the command and authority of the Holy Spirit. Ἔδοξε τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν. "*It ſeemed good to the Holy Ghoſt and to us.*" In which paſſage the words τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, "*to the Holy Ghoſt,*" muſt be referred to the apoſtles, through whom the Holy Spirit, by whom they were influenced, ſpake, commanded, and adjudged. The meaning is—"It ſeemed good to the apoſtles, in whom the power of the Holy Spirit is reſident, and whom the ſame ſpirit animates." A ſimilar mode of expreſſion is made uſe of by St. Peter, in that terrible denunciation wherewith he overwhelms Ananias, for having attempted to practiſe deceit on the Apoſtles: Acts v. 3, 4. *Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghoſt?* (that is, to us in whom the Holy Spirit is reſident.) *Thou haſt not lied unto* (mere) *men, but unto God* (who dwelleth in us). The words καὶ ἡμῖν, "*and to us,*" which follow, do not refer to the apoſtles, but to the elders and brethren of the church of Jeruſalem, who are joined with the apoſtles in the beginning of the letter. For the denomination of "the Holy Ghoſt" was not of courſe conſidered as embracing theſe, ſince they

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dreſſed epiſtles, to repreſs with every poſſible energy the attempts of the Jewiſh converts to impoſe on the necks of their Gentile brethren the yoke of the Moſaic covenant, but alſo labouring by degrees to extinguiſh in the minds of the Jews themſelves that blind and immoderate partiality which they entertained for this law of their forefathers. From his epiſtles however it appears, that, in his attempts to accompliſh theſe objects, he was ever moſt violently, and not unfrequently ſucceſsfully, oppoſed by the Jews; the miſtaken zeal and intemperate warmth of ſome of whom led them into ſuch extremes, that they heſitated not at making uſe of every means to excite a general feeling of ill-will towards St. Paul, and to detract from the high character of this great apoſtle of the Gentiles, who could juſtly boaſt of having, in the moſt marked and emphatical manner, been called to the miniſtration of the word by the voice of our Lord himſelf. On the other hand, it was not without conſiderable difficulty that the Gentile converts could be brought to endure with patience that the Jews ſhould thus obſtinately perſiſt in refuſing to recede from the cuſtoms and inſtitutions of their forefathers, and that they themſelves ſhould yield obedience to the decree of Jeruſalem, which forbad them to partake of meats offered to idols, or to be preſent at the feaſts of heathen worſhippers. As for any diſputes of inferior moment, of which deſcription there are ſome particularly adverted to, and others incidentally noticed, by

enjoyed merely an ordinary illumination of the bleſſed Spirit. The above remarks are ſubmitted to the conſideration of the reader, in conſequence of my obſerving that the force of theſe words has hitherto eſcaped the attention of commentators.

St.

St. Paul in his Epistles, I purposely pass them over in silence, as possessing no claim to our attention. CENT. I.

LVIII. Invincible nearly as the attachment of the Jewish converts to the law of ceremonies appeared for a long while to be, the destruction of their national city and temple by the Romans caused it sensibly to fall into the wane, amongst such of them as had taken up their abode without the confines of Palestine [r]. By the immediate inhabitants of that region however, who appear to have been buoyed up with the hope that it would not be long before they should obtain permission of the Romans to rebuild both their temple and the city, a belief continued still to be retained that the authority of the law of Moses was ever to be regarded by the descendants of Abraham as altogether sacred and inviolable. To the delusive expectations of these latter, an end was not put until Jerusalem had experienced its second and final overthrow, under the reign of the emperor Hadrian; when, every hope respecting the restoration of their city having vanished, a part of the Jewish brethren were prevailed on to renounce the institutions of Moses, and to embrace the freedom that was held out to them in the Gospel of Christ: others of them, however, gave the preference to continuing under the bondage of their ancient system of discipline, and in consequence thereof withdrew themselves from the

Schism generated by this controversy respecting the Mosaic law.

[r] Eusebius has left it on record, (*Histor. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xxxv. p. 106.) that, on the overthrow of Jerusalem and burning of the temple, a vast number of the Jews (μυριάδων εκ περιτομῆς,) were induced to embrace Christianity. Hence it is manifest how greatly the calamities to which they were exposed, contributed towards lessening the attachment of the Jewish people to the law of their forefathers.

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aſſemblies and ſociety of the reſt. Thoſe who thus inflexibly perſiſted in encumbering the profeſſion of Chriſtianity with the obſervances of the Moſaic ritual had the denomination of *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* given to them by the other Chriſtians, or otherwiſe aſſumed theſe titles of their own choice by way of diſtinction [s].

Controverſy reſpecting the means of obtaining juſtification and ſalvation.

LIX. Nearly allied to theſe diſagreements and contentions, reſpecting the neceſſity for obſerving the Moſaic law of ceremonies, although of infinitely greater moment, was a diſpute ſtirred up by the Jewiſh doctors at Rome, and in others of the Chriſtian churches, concerning the means whereby we are to arrive at juſtification and ſalvation. For whereas the doctrine taught by the apoſtles was, that our every hope of obtaining

[s] Of this ſchiſm or ſeceſſion we ſhall treat more particularly when we come to the reign of Hadrian, in our hiſtory of the ſecond century. The Ebionites and Nazarenes have, I well know, always hitherto been claſſed with the ſects of the firſt age, but to me this appears irreconcileable with reaſon. For it can be indiſputably proved, that thoſe of the Chriſtians who perſiſted in adhering to the obſervance of the law of Moſes, did not ſeparate themſelves from the reſt of the brethren, until Jeruſalem, which had juſt begun to riſe again from its aſhes, was ſecondly, and finally, laid waſte by the Romans, in the time of the emperor Hadrian; and that it was upon their ſo ſeparating themſelves, and not before, that they came to be diſtinguiſhed by the titles of Ebionites, and Nazarenes, and were numbered amongſt the corrupters of Chriſtianity. Previouſly to their acting thus, they were regarded by no one in any other light than as true Chriſtians. During the firſt century, they certainly had not by any means forfeited their claim to the title of brethren, although they had given proofs of weakneſs and a want of further light. Heretics, it is true, they became, but this was at a ſubſequent period, when they refuſed any longer to hold fellowſhip with thoſe who had diſcernment enough to perceive, that Chriſt had relieved the necks of even the Jews themſelves from the yoke and burthen of the law.

pardon

pardon and salvation ought to centre in Christ and his merits, these Jewish teachers, on the contrary, made it their business to extol the efficacy and saving power of works agreeable to the law, and to inculcate on men's minds, that such as had led a life of righteousness and holiness, might justly expect to receive eternal happiness from God as their due. To this doctrine, inasmuch as it went materially to lessen the dignity and importance of our blessed Saviour's character, and was founded on a false estimate of the strength of human nature, as well as repugnant to the voice and authority of the moral law itself, St. Paul opposed the most unremitting and particular resistance [*t*]. CENT. I.

LX. With these supporters of the law of Moses, these mistaken advocates for the strength Heretics commemorated by the apostles.

[*t*] It is clear, from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, that there were, besides this, other controversies in agitation at that period: but as the apostle, aware that he was addressing himself to persons to whom the subjects in dispute were familiar, omits the mention of several important particulars, doubtless well known to the Romans, but in regard to which we of the present day are, as it were, wholly in the dark, it is scarcely possible for any one, at this distance of time, to form any thing like a clear and precise notion of what these questions involved. The reader will find every thing that can, with any degree of certainty or apparent probability, be said on the subject, collected together and arranged by the following authors: Herm. Witsius, *Miscell. Sacr.* tom. ii. exerc. xx, xxi, xxii. p. 665, & seq.; Camp. Vitringa, *Observation. Sacr.* lib. iv. cap. ix, x, xi. p. 952; Jo. Franc. Buddeus, *Lib. de Ecclesia Apostolic.* cap. iii. p. 111, & seq. In these works there are indeed not a few things advanced which are founded merely in conjecture, and might, without taking any very great pains, be proved futile, and wholly destitute of substantial support; but, since we have it not in our power to substitute any thing more certain in their stead, it may be as well, perhaps, to leave them untouched, as to displace them for the purpose of bringing forward merely a fresh set of conjectures.

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Heretics commemorated by the apoſtles.

of human nature, by whoſe contentious ſpirit the church of Chriſt was prevented from enjoying a perfect tranquillity even in this its golden age, we find ancient as well as modern writers very commonly joining the following perſons, of whoſe apoſtacy or errors St. Paul and St. John make mention in their Epiſtles, namely, Hymenæus, Alexander, Philetus, Hermogenes, Phygellus, Demas, and Diotrephes. For they conceive all theſe to have been the founders of ſects, or at leaſt to have been the authors of various pernicious errors, through the introduction of which into ſome of the churches, Chriſtianity experienced a partial adulteration [*u*]. But it appears to me, that if what the ſacred writers have left us on record reſpecting theſe men be maturely weighed, the inclination of opinion muſt be that, with the exception of Alexander, Hymenæus, and Philetus, it is rather of a dereliction of Chriſtian duty and charity that they are accuſed, than of perverting divine truth, or entertaining any heretical opinions [*v*].

LX. But

[*u*] See Vitringa and Buddeus *loc. ſupr. indicat.* alſo Tho. Ittigius *de Hæreſiarchis Ævi Apoſtolici & Apoſtolico proximi*, ſect. i. cap. viii. p. 84, & ſeq.

[*v*] In 2 Tim. i. 15. we find St. Paul complaining that he had been deſerted by all who had accompanied him from proconſular Aſia, of which Epheſus was the chief city, to Rome. Of thoſe he, for ſome particular reaſons no doubt, though we are unacquainted with them, points out Hermogenes and Phygellus by name. The probability is, that theſe men, upon finding St. Paul caſt into priſon, conſidered his fate as pretty well decided, and deſpairing ever to ſee him regain his liberty, and continue the travels he had meditated, they left Rome, and returned into their own country. That their conduct in this reſpect was highly blameable, is what every one muſt admit: for to deſert a brother, and, much more, one of God's apoſtles, whoſe life is in jeopardy, and to whoſe protection and comfort one might contribute by

LX. But by none of its adverſaries or corrupters was Chriſtianity, from almoſt its firſt riſe, more

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by continuing with him, is certainly to evince both a levity of mind and alſo a forgetfulneſs of Chriſtian obligation: but the inconſtancy of theſe men has ſurely nothing in it that can authorize us to conclude, that, in returning home, they had it at all in view to become opponents of the principles which had been taught them by St. Paul, or meditated the introduction of any innovations into the Chriſtian church. Of the number of theſe inconſtant brethren there was alſo one Demas, whom St. Paul, in cap. iv. v. 10. of the ſame epiſtle, repreſents as having left him, and gone to Theſſalonica, being captivated with the love of this world. In reprobating the conduct of this man, both ancient writers and modern ones ſeem to have ſet no bounds whatever to their indignation: thoſe who except him out of the claſs of heretics, do it merely for the purpoſe of attaching to him a worſe denomination, namely, that of an abſolute apoſtate from Chriſtianity. But for my own part, I ſee nothing in the words of St. Paul which can warrant us in drawing a concluſion ſo ſevere againſt him. The apoſtle does not accuſe Demas of having forſaken Chriſt, but of having deſerted him, Paul: which latter it was certainly very poſſible for him to do, and yet to remain ſtedfaſt in the faith of Chriſt. Nor does the reaſon which the apoſtle aſſigns for this man's having forſaken him, by any means imply a defection from Chriſt. For in Scripture thoſe are ſaid to love the world who prefer the enjoyment of the luxuries, the comforts, and the ſecurity of this life to the duties which Chriſtianity enjoins us to fulfil. It appears to me, therefore, that the miſconduct wherewith St. Paul is to be underſtood as reproaching Demas, amounted to no more than this, that he had conſulted his eaſe and convenience rather than his duty, and preferred retiring to a life of ſafety and quietneſs at Theſſolonica, to continuing any longer a partaker of the ignominy, dangers, and toils, which the companions and friends of St. Paul had continually to encounter at Rome: that the man had very much miſconducted himſelf is unqueſtionable, but there are certainly no juſt grounds for believing him to have incurred that high degree of criminality which we ſo generally find attributed to him. Creſcens and Titus, who are mentioned by St. Paul in the ſame verſe with Demas, are ſtated to have gone into Galatia and Dalmatia, ſo that they had in like manner quit-

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more ſeriouſly injured; by none was the church more grievouſly lacerated, and rendered leſs attractive

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ted their captive maſter: but their departure from him was for the beſt of purpoſes, namely, to propagate the religion of Chriſt in thoſe provinces; and they went with his conſent and approbation: whereas the object of Demas in quitting Rome was altogether diſhonourable, and unworthy of a diſciple of Chriſt, for he withdrew from thence that he might ſhelter himſelf from danger, and ſpend his days in tranquillity and eaſe. Diotrephes is cenſured by St. John, in his third epiſtle, on a twofold account. Firſt, that he had arrogated to himſelf a pre-eminence in the church to which he belonged, and which had probably been committed to his ſuperintendance: and ſecondly, that he had conducted himſelf in a harſh and unfeeling manner towards certain of the brethren, who had deſerved well of Chriſtianity, and conſequently had a claim to far different treatment at his hands. The circumſtances of the caſe appear to have been theſe. Certain members of the church to which Diotrephes belonged had gone forth for the purpoſe of propagating the Chriſtian religion amongſt the neighbouring nations. Upon their return, they brought with them ſome ſtrangers or foreigners whom they had initiated in the principles of Chriſtianity, and alſo a letter from St. John, commending the faith and zeal which they diſplayed in the cauſe of Chriſt, and deſiring that they and their companions might be hoſpitably lodged and entertained during their ſtay, as was the cuſtom amongſt the early Chriſtians, and that on their again going forth they might be ſupplied, through the public liberality, with every thing which might tend to encourage and forward them in undertaking a freſh miſſion amongſt the Gentiles. But Diotrephes, it ſeems, ſpurned at the recommendation of St. John, and not only forbad theſe good and uſeful men from being maintained out of the public fund, or at the expence of the church, but alſo went to the length of excommunicating thoſe who had been induced to yield them ſome occaſional private aſſiſtance. It will ſcarcely then, I had almoſt ſaid it cannot, be denied me to infer from the above, that Diotrephes muſt have been the biſhop of this church. For how could it have been poſſible for a private individual to have excommunicated any of the brethren with whom he might be at enmity? or by what means could ſuch an one have brought it about, that a letter from one of Chriſt's apoſtles ſhould be treated with neglect and contempt?

tractive to the people, than by thoſe who were for making the religion of Chriſt accommodate itſelf

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tempt? Some particular reaſon or other there unqueſtionably was, that induced this haughty character to conduct himſelf in the manner above ſtated; and it muſt, no doubt, have been ſuch a reaſon as had all the appearance of being a juſt and an honourable one. Learned men have imagined that this reaſon is to diſcovered in the quality or condition of the perſons whom he excommunicated. Diotrephes they ſuppoſe to have been originally a Gentile, and thoſe whom he refuſed to receive Jews: and hence they conclude that the contempt entertained by the former for the latter had gained ſo complete an aſcendancy over his mind, that he could not forego the opportunity of manifeſting it, even at the expence of violating the moſt ſacred law of charity. This conjecture may, perhaps, at firſt ſight, be thought to carry with it ſomewhat of a ſpecious air; but if put to the teſt, there will be found in it nothing that can poſſibly have any weight with a conſiderate perſon at all converſant in Chriſtian hiſtory. For, not to reſt on the circumſtance of its being unſupported by any ſort of authority, except what is ſupplied by the name Diotrephes, which is certainly a Greek one, but of itſelf can ſurely never be conſidered as yielding an argument of the leaſt cogency or force; and equally paſſing over the fact of there being no ſort of memorial extant which can warrant us in believing that the Gentile Chriſtians ever permitted themſelves to be ſo far carried away by their hatred and contempt of the Jews, as to refuſe to conſider them as brethren, and withhold from them even the common fruits of charity; it is plain, from the fifth verſe of St. John's Epiſtle, that thoſe whom Diotrephes treated with ſuch harſhneſs were members of that church over which, it it ſhould ſeem, that he preſided. The apoſtle, indeed, ſpeaks of the Chriſtians to whom he alludes as conſiſting of two claſſes,—ἀδελφοὺς, or brethren, and ξένους, foreigners or ſtrangers. But, ſince he is treating of Chriſtians ſojourning in one and the ſame church, and makes uſe of the term "brethren" in oppoſition to that of "ſtrangers," there can be no doubt but that by the former he meant thoſe who had been regularly admitted into fellowſhip with the church, and by the latter ſuch as had not been ſo admitted. There are ſome, I am well aware, who think St. John is to be underſtood as meaning by "brethren," Jews—and by "ſtrangers,"

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itſelf to the principles of the oriental philoſophy reſpecting the Deity, the origin of the world, the nature

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gers," Greeks: but it cannot be ſhewn either that the term "brethren" was ever uſed by the apoſtle in this reſtricted ſenſe, or that it was cuſtomary for the Greek converts to be ſtyled ξενοι, or ſtrangers. What we ſet out, therefore, with obſerving, ſeems ſcarcely to admit of any queſtion, namely, that certain members of the church which was under the care of Diotrephes had gone forth with a view of propagating Chriſtianity amongſt the people of the neighbouring diſtrict, and on their return brought with them ſome of their diſciples, and alſo an epiſtle addreſſed by St. John to the church to which they belonged. And now, to give my own opinion as to the reaſon of their being ſo ungraciouſly received by Diotrephes, I think the cauſe of all his ill-will towards them is plainly pointed at by St. John himſelf. To every one peruſing his Epiſtle it muſt be obvious, that the apoſtle introduces at ver. 7. ſomewhat of an apology to Gaius, to whom he writes for the journey which theſe good men undertook in the cauſe of Chriſt. Firſt, he ſays, that their motive was good, that they went forth with the beſt mind and intention, being deſirous only of contributing to the honour of God. Then he adduces it as further commendable in them, that, although they might reaſonably have expected to be furniſhed with the neceſſaries of life by the people among whom they ſojourned, they yet preferred maintaining themſelves by the labour of their hands, and refuſed every ſort of recompence, gratuity, or reward. Now it is clear, that what theſe men had done, could require no ſuch defence or juſtification in the eyes of Gaius, for it appears that he had already befriended their cauſe, and we may therefore, I think, fairly infer, that what is thus ſaid by the apoſtle was meant as an anſwer to the pretext by which Diotrephes pretended to juſtify his very harſh and unchriſtian-like conduct. St. John, it is obſervable, ſeems tacitly to admit that there was ſomething irregular in the journey undertaken by theſe men, for the purpoſe of converting their heathen neighbours, and occupies himſelf in ſhewing, that if the end of their going forth, and the manner in which they conducted themſelves, were attended to, this irregularity of theirs muſt appear to be but of ſmall moment. To be brief then, it ſtrikes me that the truth of the matter was this, that theſe good men had grievouſly offended Diotrephes, by having taken upon them this

nature of matter, and the human soul. We allude to those who, from their pretending that they

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this mission to the Heathen without his consent or knowledge, and gone forth rather in compliance with the dictates of their own consciences than under any direction or authority from him. On their return, therefore, it was in vain that they looked up to this haughty character for countenance or support: not even the recommendatory letter which they had procured from St. John could have the effect of appeasing his wrath, or dissuade him from giving full vent to his indignation. Now, in early times, it undoubtedly was the custom for such of the members of any church as might be desirous of imitating the example of the apostles, and propagating the Gospel amongst the Heathen, to apply to the bishop for his licence, and to enter on their travels under his sanction. Ignatius, in almost all his epistles, inculcates this maxim—Μηδεὶς χωρὶς τοῦ ἐπισκόπου τι πρασσέτω τῶν ἀνηκόντων εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. *Sine episcopo nemo faciat eorum aliquid quæ ad ecclesiam spectant:* vid. *Epist. ad Smyrnæos*, § viii. *ad Trallianos*, *ad Philadelph.* *ad Polycarpum*; and it would be easy to produce innumerable passages from writers before the reign of Constantine, all tending to shew, that in the first ages of Christianity it was unlawful for any thing appertaining to religion to be either done or undertaken without the knowledge and consent of the bishop. The crime of Diotrephes, therefore, was not that of having assailed any of the received principles of the Christian religion, but of having discovered an unwarrantable degree of asperity and rigour in the maintenance of his own importance and dignity. For he, in the first place, manifested a latent pride of heart, in withholding from a set of pious and innocent men, who, in point of fact, were entitled to every sort of encouragement, the good offices and hospitality of the church, merely because they had not paid the proper attention to his authority and rights: and in the next place, he betrayed a still more inexcusable spirit of arrogance, in spurning at the authority and recommendation of one of Christ's apostles, to whose judgment and authority it became all bishops and churches to pay the utmost deference. This evidently is the offence which St. John censures in these words:—ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς. "He who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them receiveth us not." The apostle does not, as is commonly imagined, reprehend him

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for aſpiring to the preſidency of the church to which he belonged: for, as I before obſerved, he muſt, at the time of his offending, have been at the head of that church: but what he means to cenſure (as the words themſelves indicate beyond all controverſy) is that which he conſiders as a mark of an inordinately ambitious mind—a mind carried away by the luſt of power, namely, that he had dared to aſſume to himſelf an authority ſuperior even to that of an apoſtle. The plain ſenſe of the words is this—"But their Diotrephes, who affects to be greater than any of the apoſtles, ſets at nought my intreaties and authority."

If the men, then, of whom I have been ſpeaking, be taken from the claſs of the heretics of the firſt century, there will remain merely Hymenæus, Philetus, and Alexander. Hymenæus, the firſt of theſe, is in 1 Tim. i. 20. aſſociated by St. Paul with Alexander: in 2 Tim. ii. 17. however, we find the apoſtle ſpeaking of him in conjunction with Philetus. That one and the ſame man is referred to in both theſe places has never, as far as I know, been yet called in queſtion by any one. But, upon attentively conſidering and comparing together the two above cited paſſages, I muſt confeſs that there appears to me very great reaſon to doubt whether the Hymenæus mentioned in the firſt Epiſtle to Timothy be the ſame with, or a different man from, him who is ſpoken of in the laſt Epiſtle. Indeed, I think that I might almoſt, with ſome confidence, take upon me to aſſert that they were two diſtinct characters, having nothing in common but the name. In the firſt place, it is worthy of remark, although it certainly does not go the length of wholly deciding the point, that the companion in error whom we find aſſociated with Hymenæus in the former paſſage, is not the ſame perſon with whom his name is joined in the latter one. Secondly, it makes ſtill more ſtrongly in favour of my opinion, that the Hymenæus mentioned in the firſt Epiſtle, was, together with his aſſociate, delivered over by St. Paul to the evil one, to be tormented until he ſhould deſiſt from blaſpheming Chriſtianity, 1 Tim. i. 20. a circumſtance, ſurely, by no means eaſy to be reconciled with what is recorded of the Hymenæus ſpoken of in the ſecond Epiſtle, who is not repreſented as being under any kind of reſtraint, but as going about perverting as many of the Chriſtians as he could, and diſſeminating his errors with no ſmall degree of ſucceſs.

World, a correct knowledge (γνωσις) of the true and ever-living God, were commonly ſtyled Gnoſtics.

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ſucceſs. How, let me aſk, could it have been poſſible for a man to do this, whom the apoſtle had ſubjected to the power of the Prince of Darkneſs, for the purpoſe of bridling his blaſphemous tongue? Finally, there appears to have been as much difference between the one and the other Hymenæus, as there is between an open enemy of Chriſtianity and an artful inſidious corrupter of it. The words of St. Paul place it beyond all doubt that the Hymenæus firſt ſpoken of by him was, in every reſpect, a deteſtable character. His exhortation to Timothy is, that he ſhould unite πιστιν, *faith, i. e.* a belief of the religion of Chriſt, with αγαθὴ συνειδησιν, *a good conſcience.* Holineſs of life, or piety, is what is meant; the fruit of which is *a good conſcience*, or a mind conſcious to itſelf of no evil, and therefore peaceful and happy. The importance and neceſſity of attending to this admonition he exemplifies by the caſe of Hymenæus and Alexander, both of whom had diſcarded την αγαθὴν συνειδησιν, *a good conſcience, i. e.* had plunged into an evil courſe of life, and turned their backs on the divine law: this corruption of their morals being once wrought, their progreſs in iniquity became accelerated, and theſe wretched men, at length, made perfect ſhipwreck, as it were, of faith, arriving by degrees at ſuch a pitch of callous depravity, as not only to think ill of Chriſtianity, but alſo publicly to blaſpheme its doctrines. To "make ſhipwreck concerning faith," is, I think, manifeſtly to be underſtood as the ſame with apoſtatizing from the Chriſtian faith or religion. Theſe two men, therefore, having given themſelves up to a life of wickedneſs and impiety, were at length led on to renounce Chriſtianity altogether. But the Hymenæus ſpoken of in the latter epiſtle, although he was involved in very great culpability, was yet not ſuch a monſter as this. He had not apoſtatized from Chriſtianity, but merely given a corrupt interpretation to a part of its doctrines, namely, that which reſpects the future reſurrection of the body. The probability is, that inclining, in this reſpect, rather to the principles of thoſe philoſophers who maintained that the body is, as it were, the priſon of the rational ſoul, and matter the ſource of all evil, than to the doctrine taught by the apoſtles, he aſſerted that what Chriſt had delivered reſpecting the reſurrection of the body, was not to be underſtood in a literal ſenſe, but that what he meant to promiſe was a new life to

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Gnoſtics. This calamity was foreſeen by St. Paul, and is predicted by him in 1 Tim. iv. 1. [ω]. We

the ſouls of men, not to their bodies. The apoſtle does not attribute to this man and his aſſociate many errors. His courſe of life does not appear to have been flagitious, nor, like the other Hymenæus, had he, from a habit of ſinning, taken occaſion to deprave religion. Moreover, we do not find it imputed to him that he had been inſtrumental in cauſing others to lead a life of wickedneſs and impiety; although, as the apoſtle pretty plainly intimates, there was a tendency in his error to injure the cauſe of piety, and countenance an indulgence of our appetites. On theſe accounts St. Paul is led to ſpeak of him with ſome degree of moderation, whereas his reproof of the other Hymenæus is couched in terms of the greateſt ſeverity and vehemence. In fact, he appears rather to lament his fall than to chide it. With regard to the Alexander of whom St. Paul makes mention in his firſt Epiſtle to Timothy, my opinion is preciſely the ſame with that which I have above expreſſed reſpecting the Hymenæus there ſpoken of in conjunction with him, namely, that he was a different man from the one referred to under the ſame name by the apoſtle, in his ſecond Epiſtle, and from whom he ſtates himſelf to have received great injury at Rome. 2 Tim. iv. 14. And it appears to me that St. Paul had it in view to mark the diſtinction between them, when he added to the name of the latter the denomination of the craft which he exerciſed, calling him Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ χαλκεύς, "Alexander the copperſmith." The meaning of this addition, it ſtrikes me, was to diſtinguiſh the man of whom he ſpake from others of the ſame name who were known to Timothy, and particularly from him whom the apoſtle had, in his former Epiſtle, accuſed of perfidy to the cauſe of Chriſt. The Alexander firſt ſpoken of, it is alſo to be remarked, had, in order to prevent Chriſtianity from ſuffering further from his blaſphemy, been delivered over by St. Paul into the power of the evil one; and how then, it may be aſked, could he have inſulted St. Paul at Rome, and thrown impediments in the way of his doctrine?

[ω] Although ſome difference of opinion may ſubſiſt with regard to this prediction of St. Paul, I am yet perſuaded that every one who has made himſelf acquainted with what the Gnoſtic diſcipline was, will readily admit that that ſyſtem is more particularly pointed at in the paſſage referred to in the text, notwithſtanding that no neceſſity

We find him alſo, in various parts of his Epiſtles, exhorting the followers of Chriſt to maintain the diſcipline of their bleſſed Maſter whole and uncontaminated by any of the fables or inventions of the philoſophers of this ſect. 1 Tim. vi. 20.; 1 Tim. i. 3, 4.; Tit. iii. 9; Col. ii. 8. But an inſane curioſity, and that itch for penetrating into abſtruſe or hidden things, by which the human mind is ſo liable to be tormented, cauſed many to turn their backs on the advice and admonition of the apoſtle and his aſſociates; and no ſooner did ſome of the Gnoſtics gain a footing in the recently eſtabliſhed Chriſtian churches, than the principles that they maintained reſpecting the firſt origin of all things, and the cauſes for which Chriſt came into this world, and to which their great auſterity of demeanour, and rigid abſtinence from even the lawful gratifications of ſenſe, communicated an impoſing gloſs, were by numbers received with open ears, and ſuffered to take entire poſſeſſion of their minds. To no purpoſe was it that the apoſtles and their diſciples pointed out the emptineſs of all theſe things, and how very incongruous they were with the genuine Chriſtian diſcipline, al-

ceſſity may appear to exiſt for conſidering it as excluſively applicable thereto. Numerous are the paſſages in the other Epiſtles of the New Teſtament, as well as in thoſe written by St. Paul. which ſtrike at this ſyſtem, and call loudly on the Chriſtian churches to beware of it; in fact more numerous, perhaps, than the generality of commentators appear to have imagined. I cannot ſay that I agree in every thing with Hammond, who, in his *Annotations on the New Teſtament*, tranſlated into Latin by Le Clerc, and alſo in his book *de Epiſcopatus Juribus Diſſert. prim. de Antichriſto*, cap. iii. p. 11, & ſeq. takes upon him to apply ſeveral paſſages in the New Teſtament to the Gnoſtics, on no other ground, as it ſhould ſeem, than that of a very ſlight accordance in terms. There are, however, many obſervations of his from which it would be inconſiſtent with candour to withhold our aſſent.

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though they might carry with them a ſpecious ſhew of ſomewhat like recondite wiſdom [*x*]. Intoxicated with a fondneſs for theſe opinions, not a few of the Chriſtians were induced to ſecede from all aſſociation with the advocates for the ſound doctrine, and to form themſelves into various ſects, which, as time advanced, became daily more extenſive and numerous, and were for ſeveral ages, productive of very ſerious inconveniences and evils to the Chriſtian commonwealth [*y*].

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[*x*] The emptineſs and folly of this ſyſtem of diſcipline, is moſt aptly pourtrayed and expoſed by St. Paul in 1 Tim. i. 4.; Tit. iii. 9.; 2 Tim. ii. 16.

[*y*] Learned men are not agreed as to the time when the firſt ſects of the Gnoſtics were founded. Many of them place implicit faith in the authority of Clement of Alexandria, who ſays it was after the death of the apoſtles, in the reign of the emperor Hadrian, that theſe ſects were eſtabliſhed, and the integrity of the church was deſtroyed. *Stromat.* lib. vii. cap. xvii. p. 898, 899. With this teſtimony they conceive alſo that of Hegeſippus to coincide, who, in a paſſage preſerved by Euſebius, (*Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iii. cap. xxxii. p. 104, and lib. iv. cap. xxii. p. 142.) reports the church to have remained a pure virgin until the time of Trajan, but that after the death of the apoſtles the leaders of divers ſects began openly to make their appearance. Others, however, are of opinion that ſome congregations were formed by certain of the Gnoſtic tribe, in oppoſition to the churches of apoſtolic foundation, even ſo early as the firſt century, and during the lifetime of the apoſtles themſelves. And this opinion ſeems to be favoured by what St. John ſays, 1 John, ii. 18, & ſeq. of many Antichriſts having gone forth from the church, as well as by what has reached us reſpecting Cerinthus, and the Nicolaitans, who were heretics of the firſt century, and tainted with the Gnoſtic opinions. Conflicting as theſe ſentiments are, it appears to me not at all impoſſible to reconcile them, without requiring a ſacrifice of the point of honour to be made by either party. That diſſenſions, ariſing out of the attempt to blend the principles of Gnoſticiſm with Chriſtianity, had been generated in the churches previously to the ſecond century and the reign of the emperor Hadrian, and that ſome

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LXI. It is, however, by no means difficult to point out the way in which theſe people contrived to make the religion of Chriſt appear to be altogether in uniſon with their favourite ſyſtem of diſcipline. All the philoſophers of the Eaſt, whoſe tenets, as we have ſeen, were, that the Deity had nothing at all to do with matter, the nature and qualities of which they conſidered to be malignant and poiſonous—that the body was held in ſubjection by a being entirely diſtinct from him to whom the dominion over the rational ſoul

of thoſe who were devoted to thoſe principles, having drawn to them a number of partiſans, had proceeded to the length of holding ſeparate aſſemblies with their diſciples is moſt manifeſt, not only from the apoſtolic epiſtles, but alſo from other ancient monuments. Nor is this at all oppoſed by the words of Clement or Hegeſippus. For it ſhould ſeem that what theſe writers ſay may, in fact, be conſidered as amounting merely to this, that in the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, the patrons of hereſy came forward with greater boldneſs than before, and laying aſide the caution and reſerve with which they had hitherto maintained their doctrines, made open profeſſion of their diſſent from the reſt of the Chriſtians, endeavouring likewiſe, by every means in their power, both to augment the number of their partiſans and alſo to place their different ſects or fraternities on a firm and ſtable baſis: though, with regard to what is ſaid by Hegeſippus, it may perhaps admit of a queſtion, whether it is to be conſidered as relating merely to the church of Jeruſalem, as ſome of the learned imagine, or, as others conceive, to the church at large. In ſhort, the fact appears to have been, that during the firſt century the ſects formed by thoſe who were for interpreting the doctrines of Chriſtianity according to the principles of the ancient philoſophy of the Magi, were neither large, nor held in much account, their internal organization being at that time but very imperfect; but, that about the commencement of the ſecond century, they burſt through the obſcurity by which they had been enveloped, and aſſumed for themſelves a regular determinate form, under certain acknowledged leaders, and ſubject to a ſyſtem of laws and regulations peculiarly their own.

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belonged—that the world and all terreſtrial bodies were not the work of the Supreme Being, the author of all good; but were formed out of matter by a nature either evil in its origin, or that had fallen into a ſtate of depravity—and, laſtly, that the knowledge of the true Deity had become extinct, and that the whole race of mankind, inſtead of worſhipping the Father of Light and Life, and ſource of every thing good, univerſally paid their homage to the Founder and Prince of this nether world, or to his ſubſtitutes and agents: I ſay all theſe looked forward with earneſt expectation for the arrival of an extraordinary and eminently powerful Meſſenger of the Moſt High, who, they imagined, would deliver the captive ſouls of men from the bondage of the fleſh, and reſcue them from the dominion of thoſe Genii by whom they ſuppoſed the world and all matter to be governed, at the ſame time communicating to them a correct knowledge of their everlaſting Parent, ſo as to enable them, upon the diſſolution of the body, once more to regain their long loſt liberty and happineſs. An expectation of this kind even continues to be cheriſhed by their deſcendants of the preſent day. Some of theſe philoſophers then, being ſtruck with aſtoniſhment at the magnitude and ſplendour of the miracles wrought by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and perceiving that it was the object of our Lord's miniſtry both to abrogate the Jewiſh law, a law which they conceived to have been promulgated by the Architect or Founder of the World himſelf, or by the chief of his agents, and alſo to overthrow thoſe gods of the nations whom they regarded as Genii placed over mankind by the ſame evil ſpirit; hearing him, moreover, invite the whole world to join in the worſhip of the one omnipotent and only

only true God, and profeſs that he came down from Heaven for the purpoſe of redeeming the ſouls of men, and reſtoring them to liberty, were induced to believe that he was that very meſſenger for whom they looked, the perſon ordained by the everlaſting Father to deſtroy the dominion of the founder of this world as well as of the Genii who preſided over it, to ſeparate light from darkneſs, and to deliver the ſouls of men from that bondage to which they were ſubjected in conſequence of their connection with material bodies.

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LXII. The principles and nature of this ſyſtem of diſcipline, however, were ſuch as to render it impoſſible for its votaries to yield their aſſent to many things which were delivered by Chriſt and his apoſtles, or to interpret them according to their obvious and commonly accepted ſenſe. To have done ſo would have been acting in direct oppoſition to certain leading maxims, which were conſidered by perſons of their perſuaſion as indiſputable truths [z]. To various articles, therefore,

[z] The early Chriſtian fathers, who were acquainted with none other beſides the Grecian ſyſtem of philoſophy, perceiving that ſome of the dogmas of the Gnoſtics coincided with the principles of the Platoniſts, were induced to conclude that the diſcipline of the former had been altogether generated by a conjunction of the platonic philoſophy with Chriſtianity: to this opinion great numbers of the learned of modern days have likewiſe ſubſcribed, ſo many indeed, that they are ſcarcely to be enumerated. After having, however, examined the ſubject with every poſſible degree of impartiality and attention, I am moſt thoroughly convinced that the founders of the Gnoſtic ſchools cannot, with the leaſt propriety, be reckoned amongſt the followers of Plato. With regard to certain particulars taken ſeparately, I am very ready to admit that there is no great want of reſemblance between the platonic philoſophy and the doctrine of the Gnoſtics; but only let the two ſyſtems be compared together, as they ought to be, *in toto*, and the great

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therefore, propounded in the Chriſtian code as eſſential points of belief, they utterly refuſed their aſſent: ſuch, for inſtance, as that which attributes diſſimilarity that exiſts between them becomes at once conſpicuous. That long ſeries of *æons*, for inſtance, of either ſex, through which the Gnoſtics uniformly deduce the connexion of the Deity with matter, is a thing altogether unknown to the ſyſtem of Plato: whilſt, on the other hand, the platonic doctrine reſpecting the nature of the Deity and the origin of this world, as exhibited by the Athenian ſage in his *Timæus*, is in no reſpect whatever to be reconciled with the tenets of the Gnoſtics. The Deity is repreſented by Plato as eternally active and energetic, by the Gnoſtics as altogether paſſive and quieſcent. According to the former, this world is eternal, and a work of beauty not at all unworthy of the almighty hand that framed it: by the latter, it is regarded as an ill-formed maſs, the deſtruction of which is an object of deſire and meditation with the Deity. In the opinion of the Platoniſts, this world and its inhabitants are governed either immediately by the Deity himſelf, or through the miniſtration of dæmons commiſſioned by him: but according to the Gnoſtic ſcheme, an abſolute and entire dominion over the human race, and the globe we inhabit, is exerciſed by the founder of the material world, a being of unbounded pride and ambition, who makes uſe of every means in his power to prevent mankind from attaining to any knowledge of the true God. In addition to what are here enumerated, many other points of difference between the two ſyſtems will readily be perceived by any one who will diveſt his mind of all bias or prejudice, and be at the pains of peruſing the little book written by Plotinus the Platoniſt, in oppoſition to the Gnoſtics. Porphyry moreover, the diſciple of Plotinus, ſays, in the *Life of his Maſter*, cap. xvi. p. 118. expreſsly, that the Gnoſtics conſidered Plato as a minute philoſopher, who had never aſcended in mind and thought to the firſt principles of all things. But not to multiply words: it is allowed by all that the diſcipline of Manes was the genuine offspring of the ancient philoſophy of the Eaſt, or that of the Perſians and Chaldæans: but this diſcipline, if we except the concluſions of ſome of its dogmas, correſponds ſo exactly in all reſpects with that of the Gnoſtics, that it is ſcarcely poſſible for any two ſyſtems to appear more ſimilar to each other: that they were both, therefore, drawn from one and the ſame ſource, ſurely, cannot admit of a doubt.

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the creation of the world to the Supreme Being, and thoſe reſpecting the divine origin of the Moſaic law, the authority of the Old Teſtament, the character of human nature, and the like: for it would have amounted to nothing ſhort of an abſolute ſurrender of the leading maxims of the ſyſtem to which they were devoted, had they not perſiſted in maintaining that the creator of this world was a being of a nature vaſtly inferior to the Supreme Deity, the Father of our Lord, and that the law of Moſes was not dictated by the Almighty, but by this ſame inferior being, by whom alſo the bodies of men were formed and united to ſouls of ethereal mould, and under whoſe influence the various penmen of the Old Teſtament compoſed whatever they have left us on record. In addition to the articles of Chriſtian belief, which they felt themſelves conſtrained thus peremptorily to reject, there were others which they found it neceſſary to explain after their own manner, in order to render them compatible with the principles of the oriental diſcipline. Reſpecting Chriſt and his functions in particular, it was requiſite for them, in ſupport of their tenets, to maintain that he was to be conſidered as inferior to the Supreme Being, and as never having in reality aſſumed a material body. Their adoption of the former of theſe poſitions was an inevitable conſequence of their believing, as they univerſally did, that the Deity had exiſted from all eternity in a ſtate of abſolute quieſcence, but that at length, after ages ſpent in ſilence and repoſe, he begat of himſelf certain natures or beings after his own likeneſs, of whom Chriſt was one: to the maintenance of the latter they were conſtrained by that leading maxim of the oriental ſyſtem, that all matter

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was intrinſically evil and corrupt. Conſiſtently with theſe ſentiments, they moreover found themſelves called upon to deny that Chriſt, in reality, either underwent what he is reported to have ſuffered, or died, and returned again to life, as is recorded of him. In their expoſition of this doctrine, however, they did not all of them follow preciſely the ſame plan. Again, in regard to the purpoſes for which Chriſt came into the world, the principles of their ſyſtem rendered it neceſſary for them to aſſert, that it was not with a view to expiate the ſins of mankind, or to appeaſe the wrath of an offended Deity, that he relinquiſhed for a while his abode in the Heavens, but merely in order to communicate to the human race the long loſt knowledge of the Supreme Being; and that, having put an end to the uſurped dominion of the arrogant founder of this world, he might point out to the ſouls of men (thoſe ſpirits of ethereal origin unhappily confined in earthly priſons) the means of recovering for themſelves their native liberty and happineſs. Finally, to paſs over ſome other points which might be noticed, theſe votaries of orientaliſm were compelled, in ſupport of their favourite maxim reſpecting the malignant nature of matter, to diſcountenance every idea of a future reſurrection of men's bodies from the dead, and to maintain that what is ſaid in Scripture on the ſubject is altogether figurative and metonymical. In their manners and habits the Gnoſtics were for the moſt part melancholy and auſtere. Indeed, allowing the principles and notions which they cheriſhed reſpecting matter and the origin of our earthly forms to be juſt and correct, it cannot but follow, that to obey the inſtincts of nature, or to indulge in any ſort of bodily

bodily gratification, must be contrary to reason, and even criminal. Strange, however, as it may appear to those who are not aware of the discordant conclusions which different men will sometimes deduce from the same premises, it is most certain that some of this sect conceived themselves to be warranted by these self-same principles in plunging, with the most barefaced effrontery, into every species of libidinous and vicious excess [a].

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" LXIII. That

[a] Amongst the learned, and more particularly amongst those of our own times, there have not been wanting several who have stood forward, with considerable ingenuity and eloquence, as the advocates and defenders of the Gnostics. The professed object of some of these has been merely to extenuate, as far as possible, the errors of this sect, and in the way of explanation to offer every kind of apology for them of which the nature of the case will admit. Others of them, however, have endeavoured to clear those corrupters of Christianity from every sort of reproach, insisting on it that the ancient authors, from whom we derive our knowledge of their principles and tenets, are to be regarded either as malignant and invidious accusers, or else as ill-informed and incompetent judges. But, notwithstanding all the respect that may be due to authority so commanding, we cannot help saying, that to us these eminent writers appear to have, in this instance, laboured to as little purpose as they would have done in attempting to wash a blackamoor white, and thrown away their time and talents on behalf of a cause which is altogether desperate, and admits of no defence. If there be any truth at all in history, not a doubt can exist but that the religion professed by this sect was of a nature diametrically opposite to that which is propounded to mankind in the writings of the New Testament. If taken up separately indeed, and exhibited apart by themselves, it may be very possible for ingenuity to give to certain particulars of the Gnostic system an air of soundness and truth: but only let the parts thus selected be referred to their proper stations in the general scheme, and the fallacy will at once become apparent. That the ancient Christian writers were actuated by malice in framing their reports of the Gnostics, and incurred the guilt of slandering a worthy set

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ſet of men, for the purpoſe of ſecuring to themſelves an abſolute ſway, is what no good perſon, who is acquainted with the ſituation of things in thoſe early times, will eaſily be induced to believe, and what, I am ſure, this one conſideration alone is enough to prevent any one in his ſenſes from crediting, namely, that a variety of writers, ſeparated widely from each other in point of time, place, manners, ſtudies, and attachments, have handed down to us preciſely one and the ſame account of the Gnoſtic principles and opinions. By every unprejudiced and impartial perſon, this concurrence of teſtimony will, I am perſuaded, be allowed ſo completely to do away all ſuſpicion of ſlander and miſrepreſentation, as to render any further evidence to this effect altogether ſuperfluous. Were it at all neceſſary, other circumſtances, not leſs cogent and concluſive, might eaſily be brought forward. With regard to thoſe who would have us believe that the principles and maxims of the Gnoſtics were in reality ſound and correct, but that theſe philoſophers, having made uſe of new and unaccuſtomed terms and phraſes in propounding their opinions to the world, their meaning was haſtily miſconceived by their adverſaries, I muſt confeſs that I do not ſee how this ſuggeſtion of theirs much helps the matter. Were we to admit this repreſentation of the caſe to be juſt, the only effect it could have on our minds would be to make us no longer regard the Gnoſtics in the light of perſons led away by error, and too great a fondneſs for certain opinions of their own, but as men acting under the influence of folly and impiety. For, unqueſtionably, men who could prevail on themſelves to cloak up and diſguiſe ſentiments, which they knew to be ſound and juſt, in pompous obſcurities, and a high ſounding theatrical kind of phraſeology, muſt either have had it in view to impoſe on the world, and in this ſilly way to acquire for themſelves the reputation of ſuperior wiſdom, or otherwiſe have been complete drivellers, and entirely deprived of their wits. And as for thoſe whom this ſort of ſenſeleſs and bombaſtic language, which the perſpicuity and ſimplicity of Holy Writ moſt ſtrongly, although tacitly, condemns, could ſo far charm as to make them anxious to convert their brethren to a ſenſe of its excellence and beauty, and who, rather than renounce this ſilly and obſcure kind of jargon, would ſtir up diſſenſions in the church, and ſplit it into

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their tenets and maxims were repugnant not only to the doctrine openly delivered by Chriſt himſelf, but alſo to the tenor of thoſe writings which are conſidered by the whole body of Chriſtians as the rule and ſtandard of their religion, is what the generality of the Gnoſtics did not attempt to deny. In truth, the fact was too glaring to admit of a queſtion. They, however, took care not to be unprepared with arguments, whereby to defend and ſupport the ſyſtem of diſcipline to which they were devoted. By the leaders of ſome of their ſects it was contended, that the religion propounded by Chriſt was of two ſorts; the one of eaſy comprehenſion, and ſuited to the capacity of the vulgar; the other ſublime, and to be underſtood only by perſons of refined intellect. The former they repreſented as being contained in the books of the New Teſtament, the latter as having been unfolded by Chriſt to his apoſtles alone in private. For their own knowledge of the latter they profeſſed themſelves to be indebted to certain diſciples of the apoſtles Peter, Paul, and Matthias [*b*]. Others pretended that their leading tenets and maxims

into ſects, they cannot be regarded in any other light than that of wicked and preſumptuous men, the enemies of love, peace, and harmony, or, in a word, than as the peſts and canker-worms of the Chriſtian community. But, even granting that the meaning of theſe men might in ſome reſpects be miſunderſtood, it is yet very eaſily to be proved that the ancient Chriſtian writers are, for the moſt part, ſtrictly correct in their repreſentation of the Gnoſtic principles and opinions, and that the members of this ſect gave themſelves ſo entirely up to the ſuggeſtions of a diſordered imagination, as altogether to ſet common ſenſe and reaſon at defiance.

[*b*] Vid. Irenæus *adv. Hæreſes*, lib. i. cap. xxv. § v. p. 104. & lib. iii. cap. v. p. 179. ex diviſion. Renat. Maſſuet. Clemens Alex. *Stromat.* lib. vii. cap. xvii. p. 898. 900.

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were drawn from the oracles and viſions of Zoroaſter and other divinely inſtructed ſages of the Eaſt, as likewiſe from certain ſecret writings of Abraham, Seth, Noah, and other holy men of the Jewiſh nation, who flouriſhed long before the time of Chriſt; a pretence which, in the age of which we are ſpeaking, was certainly not wholly deſtitute of colour, ſince there were various fictitious writings in the hands of many at that time, which a ſet of villainous and artful men had palmed on the world as the productions of thoſe great and ſacred characters [*c*]. Some took upon them to exclude from the ſacred code all ſuch writings of the New Teſtament as appeared to militate with any degree of force againſt their principles, and to ſubſtitute in their places other goſpels and epiſtles of their own forging, but which they pretended to have been written by certain of our Lord's apoſtles, ſuch as Peter, Thomas, and Matthias [*d*]. Others, again, maintained, that the ordinary copies of the New Teſtament were corrupted, and in proof of this produced what they pretended to be correct ones, and in which, either through their own artifice, or want of care in the tranſcribers, a difference of reading preſented itſelf in thoſe paſſages which were adverſe to the Gnoſtic tenets. Laſtly, there

[*c*] Vid. Porphyr. *in Vit. Plotini*, cap. xvi. p. 118. edit. Fabric. Clemens Alex. *Stromat.* lib. i. cap. xv. p. 357. lib. vi. cap. vi. p. 767. Euſebius *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iv. cap. vii. p. 120. Epiphanius *Hæreſ.* xxvi. § viii. p. 59. 84. *Hæreſ.* xxxix. § v. p. 286, &c. *Conſtitutiones Apoſtolicæ*, lib. vi. cap. xvi. p. 348. et ſeq. tom. i. *Patr. Apoſtolic.* and various other authorities.

[*d*] Jo. Alb. Fabricius will be found to illuſtrate this the beſt of any one, in his *Cod. Pſeudepigraph. Nov. Teſt.* The reader may alſo conſult Beauſobre, *Hiſtoire du Manichée*, tom. i. p. 344, & ſeq.

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were many of them who insisted on it, that, in the words of Scripture, there was enveloped a recondite meaning; (an opinion, indeed, at that time commonly entertained even by persons of strictly orthodox sentiments) and, upon this principle, were continually labouring in the most silly and puerile way, by the squeezing and torturing of words, to wring from them that assistance and support, which, without resorting to such means, they could in no wise be made to yield. CENT. I.

LXIV. Great was, indeed, the detriment which the interests of Christianity experienced from this presumptuous sect, which arrogated to itself a correct and perfect knowledge of the Deity: but in a much heavier degree would the malign influence of its doctrines have been felt, had they been urged with a due measure of uniformity and consistence. Fortunately, however, it happened, that from its very first rise, this faction was split into various parties, the leaders and directors of which were as much at variance among themselves as with the Christians, whose tenets they stigmatized as highly derogatory to the character of the Deity, inasmuch as they attributed to him the creation of the world. For, although all of them took for their groundwork the same principles, yet when they came to enter into particulars, and proceeded to bring the different points of their doctrine to the test of a closer examination, for the purpose of ascertaining their due force, and reconciling them with each other, as well as of adapting them to the principles of the Christian religion, the difference of opinion that sprung up amongst these pretenders to superior knowledge was truly astonishing. All of them, for instance, were unanimous The Gnostic factions.

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mous in regarding the Supreme Deity as a being altogether different from the creator and governor of this world: but as to the preciſe nature of this laſt mentioned being, and alſo the degree of his inferiority to the Father of our Lord, conſiderable controverſy prevailed. Again, all of them were agreed in conſidering matter as intrinſically evil and corrupt, and as the womb and nurſe of all thoſe vicious deſires and propenſities wherewith mankind are continually tormented, but whether ſuch had been its pernicious nature or quality from all eternity, or whether it had accidentally become thus depraved, whether it it was animate or inanimate, and whether it were poſſeſſed of a generative faculty, and could of itſelf produce living beings or not, was made the ſubject of very violent contention. That Chriſt was the Son of the Supreme Deity, and was ſent into the world for the purpoſe of liberating the ſouls of men from the wretched bondage in which they were held by the body, was what all of them profeſſed to believe: by ſome, however, his character was eſtimated higher than by others, and with regard to the body which he aſſumed, it was aſſerted by ſome to have been merely a viſionary form; whilſt others maintained it to have been a frame of an ethereal and celeſtial nature. A ſimilar diſagreement of opinion prevailed amongſt them reſpecting a variety of other things. Nor have we far to ſeek for the cauſe which gave riſe to theſe manifold diſſenſions. For, in the firſt place, the oriental philoſophy, to which the Gnoſtics were addicted, having no foundation whatever in the principles of ſound reaſon, but being grounded merely on various refined conceits, the offſpring of human ingenuity, had for a long while been ſplit into a great number of parties

and

and ſects [*e*]. In the next place, a conſiderable portion of the Gnoſtics had, previouſly to their embracing Chriſtianity, aſſigned no limits whatever to their philoſophical ſpeculations; whereas others of them, who were of Jewiſh extraction, had, in a certain degree, reſtricted and modified the ſyſtem of diſcipline to which they were attached, by incorporating with it various particulars of the law and inſtitutions of Moſes. By ſome again, the principles of Gnoſticiſm had been united with certain maxims derived from a rude and ſuperſtitious kind of aſtronomical knowledge, by the cultivation of which different nations of the Eaſt, and particularly the Egyptians, had much corrupted their minds; whilſt by others this ſtudy of the heavenly bodies was either altogether neglected, or attended to only to be treated with contempt. Finally, in addition to the abovementioned ſources of diſagreement it may be re-

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[*e*] The learned Thomas Hyde, a man eminently ſkilled in oriental matters and opinions, expreſſes himſelf as follows in his *Hiſtoria Religionis veterum Perſarum*, cap. i. p. 26. "*Cum itaque in hac religione* (*i. e.* the religion of the magi, which aſſigned to matter a peculiar governor or ruler, and denied that this world had been created by the Supreme Deity, the author of all good) *fuerint ſectæ pluresquam* 70, (*uti etiam ſunt in Chriſtianitate*) *non eſt expectandum, ut omnia, quæ de eorum religione forte dicta fuerint, pertineant ad magos orthodoxos, ſed aliqua etiam ad hæreticos.— Magorum ſecta orthodoxa ea eſt, quæ de duobus principiis credit unum fuiſſe æternum, alterum vero creatum.—Hæretici autem fuere tam alii qui in proceſſu hujus operis enumerantur, quam magi dualiſtæ, ſtatuentes, hæc duo principia fuiſſe æterna, & alii in aliis rebus minus orthodoxe ſentientes.*" With regard to the poſition here laid down, that that particular ſect of the magi which believed that the Prince or Governor of Darkneſs and Matter derived his exiſtence from the Supreme Deity, was the predominant and principal one, it ſhould ſeem to be not altogether eſtabliſhed beyond the reach of doubt, but in every other part of his ſtatement reſpecting the diſſenſions of theſe philoſophers, this illuſtrious ſcholar is indiſputably moſt correct.

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Simon Magus. LXV. At the head of the heretics of this age, and particularly of the Gnoſtics, we find the ancient fathers of the church unanimous in placing a Simon Magus, whom they aſſert to have been one and the ſame with him whoſe depravity and perfidy was ſo ſeverely reprobated by St. Peter at Samaria. [*f*]. Being in poſſeſſion of no teſtimony

[*f*] Acts, viii. 9, 10. It ought not perhaps to be paſſed over unnoticed, that not a few writers, ancient as well as modern, have aſſigned the chief place amongſt the heretics of the firſt century to Doſitheus, or, as he is termed by the Chaldeans, Doſthai. That a man of this name exiſted about the time of our Saviour, and that he endeavoured to bring about a change in the religion of his countrymen the Samaritans, and became the founder of a ſect which continued to exiſt in Egypt even down to the ſixth century, is unqueſtionably certain. Vid. Origen, lib. vi. *contra Celſ.* p. 282 Eulogius apud Photium *Biblioth. Cod.* ccxxx. p. 883. & ſeq. But the fact is, that inſtead of being included in the claſs of heretics, he ought rather to have a place aſſigned him amongſt lunatics and madmen, or amongſt thoſe who, from a deranged ſtate of intellect have been induced to obtrude themſelves on the attention of the world as perſons eſpecially commiſſioned of God. For from the memorials that are extant reſpecting him, although they are neither very numerous nor explicit, it is clearly to be perceived that the man had been induced, not, as it ſhould ſeem, ſo much through arrogance as from downright folly and inanity, to attempt paſſing himſelf on the Samaritans as the Meſſiah. Vid. Origen, *adv. Celſum*, lib. i. p. 44. lib. vi. p. 282. *Comm. in Johannem*, tom. ii. opp. p. 219. Eulogius apud Photium *Biblioth.* p. 883. The impious ſcheme which he had formed having been communicated to the Samaritan high prieſt, orders were iſſued for his apprehenſion with a view

mony or other means whereby to controvert their authority with regard to the identity of Simon Magus, and that Simon who was accounted the parent or chief leader of the Gnoſtics, it appears to me that we have no alternative but to acquieſce in it; although there are not wanting ſeveral very eminently learned men who cannot prevail on themſelves to concede even thus much [g]. But as to the remainder of what they thus ſtate reſpecting this Simon, I muſt confeſs that it ſeems to me to be entitled to no ſort of credit whatever. For from every thing which even they themſelves have handed down to us concerning the man, it is manifeſt beyond diſpute that he can- CENT. I. Simon Magus.

view to puniſhment. By a precipitate flight, however, he eſcaped being taken; and ſeeking refuge in a remote cave, either voluntarily ſtarved himſelf to death, or periſhed for want of being ſupplied with the neceſſaries of life. Vid. Epiphanius *Hæreſ.* xiii. p. 30. tom. i. opp. *Chronicon Samaritanum* apud Abr. Echellenſem *Adnotat. ad Hebed-Jeſu Catalog. Libror. Chaldaicor.* p. 162.

[g] Camp. Vitringa in the firſt place, and after him the venerable Chriſt. Aug. Heuman, and Iſaac Beauſobre, contend that there were two Simons Magi, and that the ancient fathers, through miſtake, attributed the errors and faults of a certain Gnoſtic philoſopher of the name of Simon, to that Simon of whom mention is made in the Acts of the Apoſtles as having impoſed on the credulity of the Samaritans. Conſiderable difficulty however preſents itſelf in the way of our aſſenting to this conjecture, ſince there is no teſtimony or argument of any force to be brought in ſupport of it, nor is there any thing that oppoſes itſelf to probability in the commonly received opinion. Iſaac Beauſobre has indeed in his *Diſſertation de Adamitis*, p. 2. ſubjoined to L'Enfant's Hiſtory of the Huſſite War, § 1. p. 350. & ſeq. come forward with no leſs than eight different arguments in proof of there having been more than one Simon Magus; but of the force of either or all of theſe arguments I will leave thoſe to judge who will be at the pains of peruſing with attention a diſſertation publiſhed by me ſome time ſince on behalf of the oppoſite ſide of the queſtion, or *de uno Simone Mago.*

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not with the leaſt propriety be included in the claſs of heretics or corrupters of the Chriſtian religion, but is to be reckoned amongſt the moſt hoſtile of its adverſaries, inaſmuch as he heſitated not to revile and calumniate the character of our bleſſed Saviour, and made uſe of every means within his power to impede the progreſs of Chriſtianity: pretending at the ſame time that he himſelf, and a female aſſociate of his, of the name of Helen, were perſons really commiſſioned from above for the purpoſe of enabling the ſouls of men once more to regain their native liberty and light [*b*].

From

[*b*] Unanimous as the Chriſtian writers of the firſt three centuries, who make mention of Simon Magus, are in placing him at the head of the heretics of the firſt age, it is yet manifeſt, from every thing which they relate of him, that he could not have belonged to that claſs, but was an open and determined enemy of the Chriſtian religion in all its branches. Origen (lib. v. *adverſ. Celſum*, p. 272.) expreſsly excludes the Simonians from the number of the Chriſtian ſects, and ſtates that Jeſus was not the object of their veneration, but Simon. And with this accords the teſtimony of all the reſt; ſome of them indeed not making uſe of terms equally clear and explicit, but at the ſame time attributing to Simon principles and opinions which can leave no doubt on our minds as to the fact, inaſmuch as they could never have been entertained by any man who had not ſet Chriſt far beneath him, and arrogated to himſelf all the dignity and conſequence attached to the character of a divine legate; and hence it came to paſs that the Simonians, as is recorded by Origen and Juſtin Martyr (*Apolog. pro Chriſtianis ſecunda*, p. 70.) as well as others, experienced no ſort of diſturbance or moleſtation at a time when the Chriſtians were conſtantly expoſed to perils of the moſt formidable kind: for it was publickly known to every one, that ſo far from being the followers of Chriſt, they were the enemies of his doctrine. About twenty years ſince when, if I miſtake not, I firſt ſuggeſted this opinion, there were ſome to whom it appeared almoſt as ſacrilege to call in queſtion the many high and ſacred

From this one circumſtance alone, ſuppoſing that we were to lay out of the caſe various other corroborative proofs, it is plainly to be perceived that there muſt have been ſome miſtake with regard to the Gnoſtic Chriſtians being conſidered as the diſciples of Simon, and his being accounted the parent or inventor of the Gnoſtic philoſophy. The principles and maxims of this ſpecies of philoſophy had become familiar to the people of the Eaſt long before the time of Simon's applying himſelf to the ſtudy and culture of it in Egypt; and as to his having been the chief leader of the Gnoſtics, it is certain that not one of their ſects held him in the leaſt reverence [*i*]. The probability is, that the early fathers, perceiving the ſimilarity that ſubſiſted between Simon's tenets and thoſe of the Gnoſtics, and being, notwithſtanding their proficiency in Greek literature, but mere novices in Oriental

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authorities by whom Simon was pronounced to be the parent of hereſy, and to bring into diſpute a matter which had received the ſanction of ſo many ages. The opinion however has, on the ſtrength of its own evidence, in the courſe of time obtained for itſelf many patrons, and was not long ſince, adopted by the learned Jo. Auguſtin. Orſi, in the *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory* written by him in Italian under the particular patronage of the pope, tom. i. p. 348.

[*i*] The moſt poſitive teſtimony as to this is ſupplied by Irenæus himſelf, whom we cannot ſuſpect of having miſrepreſented the fact, ſince he is otherwiſe loud in his condemnation of the Gnoſtics, on the very ground of their being the followers of Simon. None of the Gnoſtic ſects, he obſerves, (lib. i. *adv. Hæreſes*, cap. xxvii. § 4. p. 106.) were willing *nomen magiſtri ſui* (Simonis) *confiteri*, but on the contrary, all of them were accuſtomed *Chriſti Jeſu nomen tanquam irritamentum proferre.* Their repudiation of Simon, he adds, was altogether an artifice, by which they hoped to impoſe the more readily on the ſimple and the ignorant, and to free their character from every ſort of ſtain. But in this he certainly does them wrong.

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learning, and conſequently not aware of any one's having philoſophized after this manner previously to him, were induced to believe that the whole tribe of Gnoſtics had proceeded from his ſchool.

The hiſtory of Simon.

LXVI. The hiſtory of Simon is briefly this. He was by birth a Samaritan, but having gone down into Egypt, he was induced to continue there for ſome time, and apply himſelf to the ſtudy of the various arts which were cultivated by thoſe who termed themſelves *magi*, and the ſcourges of evil dæmons. Upon returning into his own country, he contented himſelf for a while with practiſing on the credulity of the multitude by means of the powers of deception which he had thus acquired. But having been a witneſs of the real miracles wrought by Philip the deacon, at Samaria, in confirmation of the truth of the doctrine which he preached, he profeſſed himſelf a convert to Chriſtianity, cheriſhing, as it ſhould ſeem, a hope that by ſo doing he ſhould ultimately, either through obſequiouſneſs or bribery, find a way to obtain for himſelf the faculty of working ſimilar wonders, and hence have divine honours paid him by the people. An impious attempt which he made to realize theſe expectations having met with its merited chaſtiſement from St. Peter in that ſevere and memorable reproof which ſtands recorded in Acts, viii. 9, 10. he betook himſelf again to his former evil courſes, and aſſociating with him a woman of the name of Helen, ſpent the remainder of his days in wandering about through various provinces, endeavouring, wherever he came, by means of the different tricks and artifices of which he had made himſelf maſter, to impoſe on weak and ignorant minds, and make them believe that the two chief faculties of the Supreme

Supreme Deity, the one being in its nature maſculine, the other feminine, were actually reſident in the bodies of himſelf and his female companion, having been ſent down from above for the purpoſe of controuling the power of thoſe enemies and tormentors of the human race, the creator of this nether world and his ſubordinate agents; and of ſtirring up the minds of men, in ſpite of their unhappy alliance with vile matter, to the acknowledgment and worſhip of the only true God. This certainly is all that can with truth, or with any great ſemblance of truth, be ſaid of this extraordinary character; at leaſt a conſiderable degree of ſuſpicion attaches itſelf to whatever elſe is reported of him [*k*]. In what place, and under what circumſtances, his mortal career terminated is altogether uncertain: for as to what ſeveral ancient authors report of his having, in conſequence of the prayers of St. Peter, fallen headlong from a vaſt height in an attempt to fly which he made at Rome in the reign of the emperor Nero, and received thereby ſuch wounds as ſhortly afterwards occaſioned his death, it is a tale to which no credit is at preſent given, except by ſuch as are the dupes of ſuperſtition, or ready to ſwallow down every thing that has the ſupport of antiquity on its

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[*k*] Thoſe who may be deſirous of poſſeſſing themſelves of every thing that has been handed down to us reſpecting Simon, may conſult the 2d vol. of Tillemont, and thoſe other authors who are recommended by Sagittarius in his *Introductio ad Hiſtoriam Eccleſiaſticam*. We ſhould wiſh the reader to underſtand this reference as equally applicable to the various other ſects of which notice may be taken in the courſe of this work, as we ſhall ſtudiouſly make it our endeavour to avoid, as far as poſſible, adding to its bulk by any unneceſſary repetition of references to books or authorities.

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ſide. Nor is any belief now placed by the generality of people, in what Juſtin Martyr ſays of the Romans having honoured Simon with an apotheoſis, and erected a ſtatue to his memory: although it appears to be pretty certain, that the ſect which he founded continued to exiſt in the third and even down to the fourth century, and perſiſted to the laſt in paying a ſort of honorary worſhip both to him and his concubine [*l*].

LXVII. The

[*l*] The much agitated queſtions reſpecting the manner of Simon's death, and the ſtatue ſaid to have been erected to his memory at Rome, are in ſome meaſure grown obſolete, but cannot by any means as yet be ſaid to have been ſet completely at reſt; inaſmuch as there are ſtill to be found many who, on ſuch occaſions, are always vaſtly alarmed leſt the authority and credit of antiquity ſhould experience any diminution: others again, who imagine that the greater credit is due to a thing in proportion as it is more wonderful and out of the common courſe: and finally, others whom ſuperſtition ſo blinds as to render them altogether incapable of diſcerning the truth. (I.) With regard to what is related by Arnobius, a writer of the third century, and after him by various ancient authors, of Simon's flying in the air by the aſſiſtance of the evil ſpirit, and of his being precipitated to the ground, in conſequence of the prayers of St. Peter, it is in the higheſt degree incredible and abſurd. Simon was a ſlight-of-hand man, a mere juggler, not ſuch a character as the Prince of Darkneſs would have ſelected to affright and miſlead mankind. Beſides, who is there ſo ignorant as not to know how little faith is to be placed in what ancient authors relate of magicians, and prodigies wrought by the aſſiſtance of the devil? Moreover, the moſt reſpectable of the early Chriſtian writers, and beyond all Euſebius, the parent, as we may call him, of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, ſay not a ſyllable reſpecting this event, which, if it had in reality occurred, muſt ſurely have been deemed worthy of being perpetuated throughout all ages: it is plain therefore, that they either were entirely unacquainted with it, or elſe accounted it nothing better than a mere idle ſtory of the vulgar. In which-ever way their ſilence be interpreted, it is equally concluſive againſt the thing's

LXVII. The principles on which the discipline of Simon was founded appear to have been much the

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thing's ever having happened. It appears to me however extremely probable, that the tale might not be altogether of fabulous invention, but originate in a mistake, and be founded on an event which actually did occur at Rome during the reign of the emperor Nero. From the testimony of Suetonius, Juvenal, and Dio Chrysostom, it seems to be placed beyond a doubt, that some poor wretch who had pretended to possess the art of flying, and been presumptuous enough to solicit an opportunity of exhibiting a specimen of his ability in the theatre at Rome, did actually commit himself to the air, and being immediately precipitated to the ground, was literally dashed to pieces; the emperor himself, in whose presence the feat was essayed, being sprinkled with some of his blood. Sueton. *in Nerone*, cap. xii. p. 23. Now it is certainly not at all unlikely that the name of this unfortunate rival of Icarus might be Simon, and that the Christians, upon hearing that a magician (for so the common people at that time, termed every one who practised any unusual or extraordinary arts) of this name had come to such a disastrous end, might at once conclude that it was that very Simon the magician whose depravity and wickedness had long been in every one's mouth; and since they were accustomed to attribute every thing by which either the community or the church was materially benefited, to the effect of prayer, might be led to think that God had wrought destruction on this determined enemy of the true religion at the instance of St. Peter, who was perhaps at that time sojourning at Rome. Piety having once given rise to the idea, it is easily to be conceived that ingenuity would not be long in supplying all the little minutiæ of circumstances. (II.) With regard to the statue which Justin Martyr, and after him Tertullian and others, report to have been erected by the Romans to the memory of Simon Magus, a discovery which was made in the Tiberine island at Rome, about the year 1574, of a marble base or pedestal inscribed to Semo Sancus, the ancient Deus Fidius, has induced many of the learned to think that the above-mentioned fathers, in consequence of their possessing merely a superficial knowledge of the Roman superstitions and ancient popular deities, were led into a mistake, and that what they conceived to be a monument raised in honour of Simon,

was

CENT. I. the ſame with thoſe which were recogniſed by all the different ſects of the Gnoſtics. The Supreme

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was in fact a ſtatue dedicated to this ancient deity of a ſomewhat ſimilar name: an error into which they might the more eaſily fall, if, as was by no means unuſual, the ſculptor had in the inſcription, put Simoni for Semoni. Several inſtances of ſuch commutations of the letters E and I are given from different authors by the learned Jo. Caſp. Hagenbuchius in his *Epiſtolæ Epigraphicæ*, p. 70. vid. Anton. van Dale's Diſſertation *de ſtatua Simonis*, annexed to his work *de Oraculis*, p. 579. Salom. Deylingius *Obſervat. Sacr. Lib.* 1. *Obſerv.* xxxvi. p. 140. Beauſobre *Hiſtoire de Manichée*, tom. i. p. 203. 395. Longerue in *Sylloge Anecdotorum* Ven. Jo. Dict. Winckleri, p. 211. as well as innumerable other authorities. So ſtrongly ſupported indeed is this conjecture by different circumſtances, that apparently it would be doing it no more than juſtice were we to give it a higher denomination. Yet ſuch an amazing weight and influence have the names of Juſtin and Tertullian with ſome men, men too, by no means deficient either in point of ſagacity or liberal information, that they will rather, on the faith and authority of theſe fathers, give credit to that which carries with it every ſtamp and indication of error, than adopt the judgment of ſome of our greateſt literary characters, who not only ſhew it to be in the higheſt degree probable that theſe fathers laboured under a miſconception or miſtake, but alſo point out a way in which every unprejudiced perſon muſt allow it to be very poſſible that ſuch a *miſconception* or miſtake might have originated. See in addition to Tillemont *Memor.* tom. ii. p. i. p. 340. Styan Thirlby *ad Juſtin Martyr*, p. 40. Prudent. Maranus the late editor of Juſtin, *Præfat. ad Juſtinum*, p. iii. c. vi. p. lxxxv. Joſ. Auguſt. Orſi in his *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory*, written in Italian, tom. ii. p. 119. as alſo what is contended for reſpecting this ſtatue by a learned writer in the *Muſeum Helveticum*, tom. ii. p. 617. The chief of all the arguments that have been brought forward in favour of this ſtatue is, that it is not to be believed that men like Juſtin Martyr and Tertullian, to whom the Roman language and religion were familiar, could have been ſo far deceived as to miſtake the deity Semo Sancus for Simon Magus. But for my own part, when I recollect how many other errors theſe fathers have inadvertently admitted into their works, I muſt confeſs that I ſee no

preme Deity, for inſtance, to whom he attributed every poſſible degree of excellence, had, according to his tenets, exiſted from all eternity, and at a certain period begotten of himſelf a number of æons, or natures after his own likeneſs. Again, matter, which he regarded as being radically corrupt, was repreſented by him as having in like manner exiſted eternally, and being poſſeſſed of a generative faculty, to have become the parent of the author of all evil, as well as of various other viciouſly diſpoſed natures. The creation of this world he conſidered as having been brought about by a female æon, with the aſſiſtance of certain powerful genii, without the concurrence or ſanction of the Supreme Deity. By this creator of the world, he maintained, who was herſelf of a divine nature and origin, were generated an incredible number of living ſouls, whom ſhe united with bodies compoſed of matter, and conſequently

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no difficulty at all in giving them full credit for ſuch a blunder as this: whilſt on the other hand, every thing whatever ſeems to oppoſe itſelf to my believing that the Romans could for a moment have ſo far diſcarded every ſenſe of propriety, as to aſſign to a Jew or Samaritan of infamous reputation, to a man in fact no better than a juggler or a mountebank, a place amongſt their gods, and to honour his memory with a ſtatue. Concerning Helen, the aſſociate of this deſpicable mortal, I ſhall enter into no diſcuſſion or enquiry. The labours of the learned with regard to her hiſtory, have hitherto only tended to involve nearly the whole of it in difficulties and obſcurity. Of the fact of her having exiſted, however, there can be no doubt, unleſs all that has come down to us reſpecting Simon be untrue; for Irenæus, Euſebius, and Auguſtin, all agree in ſtating that her image was preſerved, and had a ſort of worſhip paid to it by the Simonians, and according to Origen, *contr. Celſ.* lib. v. p. 272. the reſpect which they thus manifeſted for the memory of this woman cauſed them to be occaſionally ſtyled Helenians.

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corrupt. Man therefore, according to him, was compounded of two parts, the one celeſtial, the other terrene; the one divine, the other depraved. The human race he repreſented as held in bondage by the founders or creators of this world, and as living in utter ignorance of the Supreme Deity, who contemplating with ſorrow the diſaſtrous ſituation and miſerable ſervitude into which ſuch a number of æthereal ſpirits were thus unhappily plunged, was in the higheſt degree ſolicitous that they ſhould be ſtimulated to purſue that path which, upon their releaſe from the body, would conduct them to his immediate reſidence, the ſeat of everlaſting joy and happineſs, to which this pretended philoſopher, in common with the reſt of the Gnoſtics, gave the appellation of *pleroma*. The courſe pointed out by him to be obſerved by the ſouls who were deſirous of attaining to this bliſsful ſtate, was to caſt off all obedience to the founders of this world, by whom he profeſſed himſelf to mean thoſe beings who were commonly worſhipped as deities by the multitude, and to endeavour, by means of meditation and mental exertion, to elevate themſelves and approach as nearly as poſſible to the ſupreme ſource of all good. Souls not inflamed with ſuch a wiſh, were, upon the diſſolution of their preſent earthly priſons, to paſs into new bodies until they ſhould arrive at a knowledge of their great and everlaſting parent. The laws to which the nations of the earth paid obedience, not excepting even the peculiar code of the Jews, were, he maintained, all fabricated by the founders of this world for the purpoſe of perpetuating the bondage of captive ſouls, and that they might therefore be diſregarded with impunity by all ſuch minds as had acquired illumination

mination from the fountain of all wisdom. When the projected deliverance of the souls of all mankind from the captivity of matter had been finally accomplished, and they had again joined their first great parent in the regions above, the whole fabric of this nether world and all its dependencies, which he pronounced to be a rude and imperfect work, would, according to his tenets, experience an overwhelming and utter destruction at the hands of the Deity. The discipline of Simon, however, differed most essentially from that of the Gnostic Christians in its principal feature, since instead of joining with them in paying homage to the Saviour of mankind, his aim evidently was to wrest from Christ the glory of man's recovery, and make it the inheritance of himself and his concubine. For he pretended that the greatest and most powerful æon, of the masculine sex, was actually resident within himself, and that the mother of all souls had in like manner taken up her abode in the corporeal frame of his companion Helen; and asserted that he was in an especial manner commissioned of the Most High for the three-fold purpose of communicating to captive souls the knowledge requisite for their deliverance, of overthrowing the dominion of the founder of this world, and of delivering Helen from the subjection in which she had long been held by the subordinate agents or associates of this author of all evil [*m*].

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LXVIII. The

[*m*] In the accounts given us by ancient writers of the religion and discipline of Simon, the student finds himself occasionally embarrassed by a want of coherence and perspicuity. By no one has the subject been handled with greater clearness and precision than by the uncertain author of *The Recognitions of Clement* and *The Clementina*, who under the

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LXVIII. The ſecond ſtation in the claſs of heretics derived from the Gnoſtics, is in general aſſigned by ancient writers to Menander, another Samaritan, whom they repreſent as having been initiated in the ſchool of Simon. But little credit however can be given to this after comparing together the accounts which Irenæus, Juſtin, Tertullian, and a few others have handed down to us reſpecting this man. For from what they ſay it is plain, that his object was to ſupplant both Chriſt and Simon, and to paſs himſelf on the world as the real Saviour of mankind, or an æon ſent down from above for the purpoſe of effecting the ſalvation and deliverance of the ſouls of the human race, by communicating to them a knowledge of the true God; a circumſtance which places it beyond all doubt, that he came neither within the deſcription of a heretic, nor that of a Simonian. The opinion of the early writers above alluded to reſpecting him was, in all probability, grounded on their perceiving that his tenets and doctrine reſpecting the Deity, the nature of matter, the origin of this world, and the ſouls and bodies of its inhabitants, were nearly ſimilar to thoſe which were entertained and taught by Simon and the Gnoſtic Chriſtians. From what has

the form of a diſputation between St. Peter and Simon, throws conſiderable light on ſeveral things but very imperfectly and confuſedly treated of by other writers. Nor do I ſee any juſt reaſon that ſhould prevent us from yielding him every ſort of credit as an expounder of the tenets of Simon, ſince he lived in an age when the ſect of the Simonians was ſtill in exiſtence, and has certainly recorded nothing that is in any material degree repugnant to the accounts given by other authors. As for intentional miſrepreſentation or falſehood, it is difficult to conceive any inducement that he could have had to be guilty of it.

reached

reached us respecting Menander, I should conceive his character to have been rather that of a weak enthusiast than of an artful impostor. The sect which he founded existed but for a short period, and appears to have been always confined within very narrow limits [*n*]. CENT. I.

LXIX. Since Simon and Menander cannot properly be said to come within the description of heretics, it follows of course that at the head of those Christians who were tainted with the Gnostic heresies we must place the Nicolaitans, provided that the Nicolaitans who are rebuked by our blessed Lord in Rev. ii. 6. 14, 15. be the same with those who under that denomination are reckoned by the writers of the second century amongst the sects of the Gnostics [*o*]. The generality of ancient writers consider Nicolaus, one of the seven men elected by the church of Jerusalem, as having been either directly or indirectly the author of this sect. It should seem however, as if their opinion as to this was founded rather on uncertain report and conjecture than on any testimony that could be relied The Nicolaitans.

[*n*] On this subject the reader may consult Irenæus, lib. i. cap. xxiii. p. 100. Epiphanius *Hæres.* xxii. p. 61. Justin Mart. *Apolog.* ii. p. 69. Theodoret, *Hæret. Fabular.* lib. i. cap. ii. p. 193. tom. iv. opp. Tertullian *de Anima*, cap. l. p. 187. *de Resurrect.* cap. v. p. 205. Recourse may also be had to Ittigius, Tillemont, Nat. Alexander, S. Basnage, in *Annal.* and other recent authors who have directed their attention to the elucidation of the early Christian History.

[*o*] The opinions of such of the learned as either deny that such a sect as that of the Nicolaitans ever existed, or maintain that it took its name, not from any particular person who might be the founder of it, but from the accordance of its principles with the impiety of Balaam, have been made the subject of particular investigation by me in a dissertation which is to be found at p. 395. of vol. i. of my *Syntagma Dissertationum ad Historiam Eccles. pertinent.*

on

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The Nicolaitans.

on [*p*]. Our bleſſed Saviour ſtates the Nicolaitans to have incurred his diſpleaſure in conſequence of the laxity of their morals, and their continuing to partake of meats offered to idols, and to indulge in fornication contrary to the Apoſtle's injunction [*q*], but he does not charge them with entertaining any heretical principles or opinions. By the writers of the ſubſequent ages however, they are repreſented as having adopted the Gnoſtic maxims reſpecting the exiſtence of two principles, the one of light, the other of darkneſs, the origin of the viſible world, the miniſtry of æons, and the like. Over every thing relating to this ſect there hangs a degree of obſcurity which we believe it will ever be found beyond the power of human ingenuity to diſpel [*r*].

LXX. In

[*p*] Caſſianus, *Collation.* xviii. cap. xvi. p. 529. edit. Francf. 1722. fol. ſays, *Nam licet hunc Nicolaum quidam aſſerant non illum fuiſſe qui ad opus miniſterii ab Apoſtolis eſt electus, nihilo tamen minus eum de illo diſcipulorum fuiſſe numero negare non poſſunt.*

[*q*] Acts, xv. 29.

[*r*] Irenæus *adv. Hæreſ.* lib. iii. cap. xi. p. 188. Tertullian *de Præſcript. Hæret.* cap. xlvii. p. 128. Clemens Alex. *Stromat.* lib. iii. cap. iv. p. 524. Auguſtin *de Hæreſ.* cap. v. p. 60. To theſe I omit adding Epiphanius, becauſe he confeſſes that what he ſays of the Nicolaitans belongs equally to all the different ſects of the Gnoſtics. Upon a compariſon of the grounds on which our bleſſed Saviour's rebuke of the Nicolaitans is founded, with the errors which are attributed to them by the writers of after-times, I muſt confeſs that I cannot help entertaining very conſiderable doubts whether the Nicolaitans mentioned in the Revelations were the ſame with the Nicolaitans of Clement and others, or a different ſect. Had the Nicolaitans with whom our Saviour was ſo much diſpleaſed been devoted to the Gnoſtic diſcipline and opinions, they would not, in my humble judgment, have been reproved by him merely on account of their reprehenſible courſe of life, but

LXX. In the same age with St. John and the Nicolaitans flourished, as is commonly thought, the Jew Cerinthus, though there are not wanting some who consider him as having lived in the second century, and long posterior to the time of John [*s*]. Having devoted himself for some time to

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their erroneous principles would likewise have been made the subject of animadversion, and his followers would have been cautioned against imbibing any of their extravagant and pernicious tenets. For surely these principles were pregnant with no less, or rather a greater degree of danger, to the minds of the simple and artless Christians than was to be apprehended from the offensive improprieties and vices in which the Nicolaitans indulged, in direct opposition to the apostolic precepts. And is it to be believed, that our blessed Saviour, when enjoining his followers to avoid associating with the Nicolaitans, on account of their incontinence, would not have touched on, or in the slightest degree alluded to the origin or fount from whence this laxity of morals had proceeded? The probability, as it appears to me is, that in the second century amongst the numerous leaders of the different Gnostic sects which were at that time springing up in almost every direction, there might be one of the name of Nicolaus, who might give to his followers the denomination of Nicolaitans, and that the title, thus acquired by this sect, having reached the ears of the early Christian fathers, who, as we well know, were very apt occasionally to fall into mistakes as to matters of this kind, they were hastily led to consider these sectaries as being one and the same with the Nicolaitans mentioned by St. John in the Epistles to the seven Asiatic churches: and since they knew of no man of the name of Nicolaus who had attained to any degree of reputation or consequence in the Christian community except him who is mentioned in Scripture as having been elected one of the seven ministers of the church of Jerusalem, they at once concluded tha this sect must have owed its origin to him. My desire is to be understood as throwing out these suggestions rather in the way of conjecture, than as pretending to speak with any degree of peremptoriness as to this point. I will not however scruple to say, that I think I have at least a strong probability in my favour.

[*s*] See Sam. Basnage *Annal. Politico-Ecclesiast.* tom. ii. p. 6. Petr. Faydit *Ecclaircissemens sur l'Histoire Ecclesiastique*

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to the ſtudy of letters and philoſophy at Alexandria in Egypt, he at length engaged in one of the moſt difficult undertakings imaginable, namely, that of harmonizing the principles of the Gnoſtic diſcipline and thoſe of Chriſtianity, with the peculiar maxims and opinions of the Jews. From the principles of the Gnoſtic philoſophy he adopted thoſe which reſpect the pleroma, the æons, the origin of this world, and the great length of time through which the human race had remained in utter ignorance of the ſupreme Deity, together with all ſuch maxims and tenets as were intimately connected with theſe. As he could not however, with conſiſtency, admit

tique des deux premieres Siecles, cap. v. p. 64. Fred. Adolph. Lampius, *Comm. in Evangel. Johannis Prolegom.* lib. ii. cap. iii. § xvii. p. 182. all of whom are of opinion that Cerinthus lived about the time of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius. The arguments on which their opinion is grounded have been replied to by Jo. Franc. Buddeus in his work *de Eccleſ. Apoſtolic.* cap. v. p. 412. The principal argument relied on by thoſe of the learned who diſſent from the common opinion is, that the early fathers, for the moſt part, place Cerinthus after Carpocrates in the catalogue of heretics, which latter, without diſpute, lived and taught in the ſecond century; a circumſtance which doubtleſs would carry with it conſiderable weight, did it appear that the early Chriſtian writers had paid due attention to the regular order of time in their enumeration of heretics: but inſtead of this we know the fact to be that the names of heretics are ſet down by Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement, and others at random, without any regard being had to the times in which they lived.

It is aſſerted by Irenæus, Jerome, and others, that St. John wrote his goſpel, and particularly the commencement of it, with an expreſs view to the confutation of the erroneous tenets of Cerinthus reſpecting Chriſt. See Tillemont's *Memoires*, tom. i. p. iii. p. 936. This is denied by ſome more recent writers, but on grounds not altogether ſatisfactory. See a ſmall work of Geo. L. Oeder, *de Scopo Evangelii Johannis*, publiſhed at Leipſig in 1732, in 8vo.

into

into his ſyſtem any thing abſolutely repugnant to the Jewiſh religion, it became neceſſary for him in part to qualify what he thus adopted, and he accordingly relinquiſhed the poſition that matter was intrinſecally evil and corrupt, inaſmuch as it ſet itſelf in oppoſition to the belief entertained by the generality of the Jews reſpecting the future reſurrection of men's bodies. The character likewiſe of the founder of this world, whom he conſidered as the legiſlator and governor of the Jewiſh people, was much ſoftened down by him. The depravity, pride, and cruelty attributed to this being by the Gnoſtics, were all thrown into the ſhade, and he was repreſented as one of the moſt powerful genii, although unfortunately eſtranged from the true God. In the creation of this world he was not ſuppoſed to have acted without the knowledge and permiſſion of the Deity, or to have been influenced by any improper motive. By way of reconciling this ſtrange jumble of opinions with Chriſtianity, Cerinthus maintained, that the ſupreme Deity, being diſpleaſed with the uncontrouled dominion uſurped by the founder of this world and his ſubordinate agents over the human race, which had by degrees degenerated into the moſt irrational tyranny, reſolved at length to put an end to it, and with this view to ſend down amongſt mankind a celeſtial legate, or meſſenger, who ſhould remove from their minds that cloud of ſuperſtition and ignorance with which they were oppreſſed, and by communicating to them a knowledge of their firſt great Parent, inſtruct them in the way of regaining their native liberty and happineſs. Amongſt the ſons of men no corporeal receptacle was deemed by the Almighty wiſdom to offer ſo fit an abode for an heavenly

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gueſt of this kind as the body of Jeſus, the legitimate child of Joſeph and Mary, a perſon eminently gifted with talents and underſtanding. Upon him therefore it was ordered, that one of the ever-bleſſed æons, whoſe name was Chriſt, ſhould deſcend in the ſhape of a dove at the time of his baptiſm by John. Jeſus then having the æon Chriſt thus united with him, commenced, according to Cerinthus, a vigorous attack on the power and dominion of the founder of this world and his aſſociates, endeavouring to convince the Jews that the one only ſupreme God was alone deſerving of their worſhip, and confirming the truth of his doctrine and precepts by various miracles and ſigns. The reſult, however, of theſe his labours in the cauſe of the Deity was unfavourable: for the Jewiſh elders, at the inſtigation of that Being whoſe empire was thus ſeriouſly invaded, and whoſe energies were of courſe exerted to the utmoſt for the preſervation of his uſurped authority, laid violent hands on Jeſus and put him to death on the croſs. In the ignominy and horrors of this puniſhment nothing was ſuppoſed to have been involved beyond the bare corporeal frame of the man Jeſus, the Nazarene: for immediately on the ſeizure of his perſon by the Jews, the divine principle, or Chriſt, by which it had been animated, took its departure from the earth and returned to the bliſsful regions of the pleroma from whence it had originally proceeded. The way chalked out by Cerinthus for obtaining ſalvation, partook in like manner of the Gnoſtic, Jewiſh, and Chriſtian ſchemes. According to him it was incumbent on all who were deſirous of arriving at future happineſs to relinquiſh every ſort of homage which they might have been accuſtomed to pay

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to the founder of this world (who previouſly to the time of Chriſt had been the leader of the Jewiſh people) and his aſſociates, or to any of the various Gentile deities, and to make the Supreme Deity, and father of Chriſt, together with Chriſt himſelf, the only objects of their reverential worſhip. Such parts of the law of Moſes as Jeſus by his example had ſanctioned, he pronounced fit to be ſtill obſerved, the reſt to be diſregarded. Finally, he declared it to be neceſſary that in all their actions they ſhould ſtrictly conform themſelves to the law of Chriſt. To thoſe who ſhould continue ſtedfaſt in their obedience to theſe precepts he held out the promiſe of a future reſurrection from the dead—enjoyments of the moſt exquiſite nature during Chriſt's reign here upon earth—and ſubſequently, a life of immortality and endleſs joy in the bliſsful regions above. For, adhering to the Jewiſh way of thinking in this reſpect, Cerinthus held, that upon the reſurrection of our bodies Chriſt would be again united with the man Jeſus, and having founded a new city on the ſcite of the ancient Jeruſalem, would reign there in triumphant ſplendour for the ſpace of a thouſand years [*t*].

[*t*] In the view which I have here given of the Cerinthian diſcipline, I am borne out by the expreſs teſtimony of ancient writers. My account, however, amounts to nothing more than an imperfect ſketch. For from no ancient author could I obtain that full degree of information reſpecting the Cerinthian ſyſtem of religion which alone could enable me to exhibit a complete and ſatisfactory view of it; a thing which it would gratify me highly to have done, ſince in point of reaſon and ingenuity the author of it appears to have poſſeſſed a ſuperiority over the reſt of the Gnoſtics. It cannot indeed be denied, that by the generality of thoſe writers who ſpeak of him he is repreſented as devoid of underſtanding, libidinous, depraved, a man

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who held out, as an allurement to his followers, the promiſe of a free indulgence in obſcene gratifications during the future reign of Chriſt upon earth. But really, as far as I am capable of forming a judgment on the matter, the blemiſhes and defects of his character appear to have been very unreaſonably magnified by his accuſers. In his opinions I perceive, it is true, the marks of a mind not ſufficiently purified, and diſpoſed not unfrequently, to deviate from the path of ſound reaſon: but nothing whatever beſpeaking a propenſity to vicious or libidinous indulgences; nothing indicating a love for or purſuit of illicit pleaſures: there are even ſome things in them which make in his favour, and prove him to have been deſtitute neither of ſenſe nor of ſpirit. How, let me aſk, could it be poſſible that the kingdom which it was aſſerted Chriſt would hereafter eſtabliſh at Jeruſalem, ſhould have been held forth in promiſe as a ſink of immorality, vice, and concupiſcence, by one who entertained the higheſt reverence for the wiſdom, juſtice, and virtue of Jeſus of Nazareth, and maintained that it was his ſuperior ſanctity and knowledge which induced the Deity to ſelect his corporeal frame as a fit terreſtrial reſidence for his offſpring Chriſt, the chief of the celeſtial æons? How could this have been done by one who was conſtantly propounding Jeſus as a model of virtue and wiſdom to mankind? By one again who inculcated the neceſſity of ſtrictly obſerving that part of the law of Moſes to which Jeſus himſelf had conformed? Is it to be believed, that Cerinthus could have excited or countenanced in his followers an expectation that in the looked-for kingdom of 1000 years, during which, according to him, Chriſt, the immediate offſpring of the Supreme Deity, united to the perſon of Jeſus, the moſt intelligent and ſacred of human beings, was to reign here on earth, every moral tie would be diſſolved, and mankind be left at liberty to gratify their inordinate deſires without reſtraint? Or in other words, that the greateſt and beſt of potentates, the immediate offſpring of the Deity, would become the inſtrument of promoting amongſt a ſet of ſubjects newly recalled to life, the perpetration of all thoſe crimes and flagitious enormities of which he had in times paſt expreſſed his utter deteſtation? To my mind this appears ſo remote from all probability, that I know not how to account for ſo many learned men's having inſiſted on it that Cerinthus held forth to his followers the proſpect of their being permitted to riot without reſtraint in one continued ſcene of the groſſeſt ſenſuality during the expected future reign of Chriſt here upon earth. I am at no loſs however, in aſſigning this accuſation to its proper

proper ſource. Not a doubt can exiſt but that it originated with Caius the preſbyter and Dionyſius Alexandrinus, two writers of the third century, as appears from Euſebius *Hiſtor. Eccleſ.* lib. iii. cap. xxviii. p. 100. To prior ages it was utterly unknown. But at the time when the above-mentioned authors wrote the diſpute with the Chiliaſts, or thoſe who maintained that Chriſt would hereafter reign upon earth for the ſpace of a thouſand years, was carrying on with conſiderable warmth, and the object of theſe writers evidently was to repreſs this doctrine. With a view therefore the more readily to accompliſh their end, they made it appear that the original author or parent of Chiliaſm amongſt the Chriſtians was Cerinthus, a pernicious character, and one who had long ſince been condemned. And this, perhaps, might be allowable enough: but not content with this, they, by way of ſtill more effectually preventing the Chriſtians from every imitation of Cerinthus, deemed it expedient to augment the popular antipathy againſt him, and to perſuade the multitude that he was a diſtinguiſhed patron of vice and iniquity; and that it was impoſſible for any one who was not inimical to the cauſe of piety and virtue, to approve of or countenance his doctrine reſpecting the future reign of Chriſt upon earth. Should it be objected to me, as it probably may, that this caſe of mine reſts merely on ſuppoſition, and is grounded on no poſitive evidence, I confeſs it. But when it is conſidered that prior to theſe adverſaries of Chiliaſm, no one had ever attributed to Cerinthus ſo groſs an error; when it is remembered that this very error with which he is charged is by no means to be reconciled with the other parts of his doctrine; in fine, when we reflect how utterly incredible it is that any man, not altogether bereft of his ſenſes, ſhould make an unreſtricted licence to riot in obſcenity and filth the characteriſtic feature of a kingdom over which Jeſus Chriſt was triumphantly to reign; I rather think that but few things will appear to have a greater weight of probability on their ſide than the conjecture which I have thus hazarded.

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Having relieved Cerinthus from the weight of this reproach, I will now advert to ſome particulars connected with the hiſtory of his ſyſtem of diſcipline, in regard to which it were to be deſired that further light could be obtained. (I.) It may be recollected that I have ſaid Cerinthus differed in opinion from the reſt of the Gnoſtics reſpecting the nature of matter. Now for this I cannot vouch any ancient authorities, but it ſtruck me as very fairly deducible from certain of his tenets. For ſince he believed Jeſus to have been a real man, born according to that

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that law by which all other mortals are produced, and yet conſidered Chriſt, who was of a divine nature, as having been united in the moſt intimate connection with him; and ſince it was likewiſe a part of his creed that men's bodies would hereafter be reſtored to life from the dead, it ſurely muſt be impoſſible that he could have regarded matter as the fountain and ſeat of all evil. In this reſpect I ſhould ſuppoſe him to have been of the ſame opinion with thoſe philoſophers of the Eaſt who conſidered matter as having been originally produced by the Deity, and who conſequently could not regard it as abſolutely and intrinſecally corrupt. What it was that Cerinthus looked upon as the cauſe of evil is not mentioned by any ancient author, nor is it to be collected from any maxims or tenets of his that have been handed down to us on record. (II.) A conſiderable degree of obſcurity likewiſe hangs over the opinion entertained by him reſpecting the founder of this world. His notions of this Being appear to have been that he was of an order vaſtly inferior to the Supreme Deity, but altogether devoid of malice and arrogance; and that although he had loſt all knowledge of God, the governor of all things, yet that his work was undertaken and completed with the knowledge, conſent, and aſſiſtance of the Moſt High. Since it was not his wiſh to abrogate the whole of the Jewiſh law, although he conſidered it as having been framed by the founder of this world, but meant that a part of it ſhould remain in force, it is plain that he muſt have attributed to this Being a portion of divine wiſdom and illumination. It ſtrikes me, therefore, that Cerinthus muſt have conceived that the Supreme Deity, by means of one of thoſe celeſtial natures whom the Gnoſtics term æons, excited the Being who afterwards became the founder of the world, and who at that time perhaps preſided over one or other of the heavenly orbs, to undertake the reducing into order and form the rude and undigeſted maſs of matter which had through infinite ages been emanating from the boſom of Omnipotence, as alſo to repleniſh it with inhabitants, and give to thoſe inhabitants a ſet of laws. That the Deity moreover was not at firſt diſpleaſed with the dominion which this Being and his aſſociates in labour aſſumed over the human race; but that in proceſs of time, upon obſerving that the founder of the world, who had reſerved to himſelf the government of the Jewiſh people, and in a much greater degree thoſe of his aſſociates to whom the other nations of the earth had been rendered ſubject, had departed widely from the principles of ſound wiſdom, he determined by the miſſion

miſſion of Jeſus Chriſt to put an end to their tyranny. As no means preſent themſelves for our obtaining a further inſight into the opinions of Cerinthus as to theſe points, we are conſtrained to leave the ſubject as we found it, enveloped in obſcurity. (III.) One of the accuſations brought againſt Cerinthus by ancient writers, is that of his having entertained too great a partiality for the law of Moſes: an accuſation which I muſt confeſs I think to be by no means an ill-founded one. For it would be eaſy to point out ſeveral parts of his diſcipline which prove, to demonſtration, that an attachment to the Jewiſh rites and opinions had gained a ſtrong and predominating influence over his mind. And they are therefore in an error, who with Baſnage and Faydit deny him to have been of the Jewiſh religion, as well as thoſe who, with Maſſuet (*Diſſ. in Irenæum*, i. art vi. p. lxv.) aſſert that what is ſaid by ancient authors of his having had it in view to reconcile the Jewiſh religion with Chriſtianity is not deſerving of credit. What is commonly reported however, of his having wiſhed to impoſe on the necks of the Chriſtians an obſervance of the whole law, is equally remote from the truth. The nature of his ſyſtem of diſcipline did not admit of this; for in many reſpects it went to ſhew that the author of the law of Moſes, *i. e.* the founder of this world, had erred: and ſince it was inculcate by Cerinthus that no ſort of homage ſhould for the futu be paid to this Being, but that the Supreme Author every thing and the Father of Chriſt ſhould alone be w ſhipped by the Jews as well as all other nations, it muſt neceſſity have been a part of his ſcheme, that all the rites which were ſo peculiarly appropriate to the God the Jews as not to admit of their being transferred into t ſervice of another, and a ſuperior Deity, ſhould be abo hed. Moreover, both Epiphanius and Philaſter, the latter in his book *de Hæreſibus*, cap. xxxvi. p. 78. The former *Hæreſ.* xxviii. § 2. p. iii. expreſsly ſay that it was *a part* on of the law of Moſes which appeared to Cerinthus worthy of being retained, and to which he thought the Chriſtians ght with propriety conform. It is obſervable, however, t t Dionyſius Petavius, the Latin tranſlator of Epiphanius, as ſkipped over the words ἀπὸ μέρους in the original, and it ems not at all unlikely that this negligence of his may ha given occaſion to many to think that Cerinthus wiſhed to encumber Chriſtianity with an obſervance of the whole of the law of Moſes. And here, ſhould any one be deſirous of knowing what part of the old law it was that Cerinthus thought to be of perpetual obligation, and what part he conſidered as having been abrogated by Chriſt, our reply muſt be, that it

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it is a queſtion involved in great obſcurity, and conſequently, one not eaſily to be reſolved. The moſt probable conjecture appears to be, that he took the example of Chriſt for a ſtandard or rule, deeming it proper that all thoſe things to which Chriſt, during his union with the man Jeſus, had conformed, ſhould be obſerved and complied with by thoſe who profeſs themſelves to be his followers. An opinion which indeed Epiphanius ſeems greatly to countenance, when in *l. c.* § v. p. 113. he ſays, that the Cerinthians after the example of Chriſt ſupported the authority of the law of Moſes. (IV.) At the firſt ſight it ſeems ſomewhat wonderful that a man who conceived it proper to reject a part of the Moſaic law, ſhould yet deem it fit to retain the Jewiſh perſuaſion reſpecting the future millenary reign of the Meſſiah here upon earth, an idle notion which had its riſe long after the promulgation of the law. But upon a more attentive review of the diſcipline of Cerinthus, I think I can perceive the reaſons which induced him to promote rather than repreſs the expectation of an empire of this kind. The holy, wiſe, and innocent man Jeſus, in whoſe corporeal frame Chriſt had taken up his reſidence during his abode here on earth, had, according to the Cerinthian ſcheme, experienced great injury at the hands of this his celeſtial gueſt. For when the Jews, in conſequence of his having attacked their lawgiver and Deity, proceeded to [illegible] violent hands on Jeſus, Chriſt, by whoſe inſtigation and command he had done ſo, inſtead of ſupporting him againſt them, at once took his departure and left this unhappy mortal, unbefriended and defenceleſs, to ſink under the torments and fury of his enraged enemies. Now a deſertion of this kind could not fail to carry with it an air of much injuſtice and ingratitude. For what can be conceived more unprincipled than in a time of the greateſt peril to deſert a good and eminent character, through whom one may have taught and acted, and leave him to be tormented and put to death by his enemies? By way therefore of relieving the character of the Deity and his ſon Chriſt from this blemiſh, Cerinthus deemed it expedient to promote amongſt his followers a belief that Chriſt would one day or other, even here upon earth make ample recompenſe to his former mortal aſſociate, both in honours and rewards, for all the injuries and ſufferings to which he had been ſubjected on his account. For that at a fixed time he would again deſcend from above, and renewing the union which had formerly ſubſiſted between him and Jeſus, make him his partner in a triumphant reign of one thouſand years duration. Contraſted with this magnificent and laſting recompenſe, the calamities endured

by Jesus on account of Christ become light, and insignificant. (V.) It is sufficiently clear that the Cerinthian sect flourished chiefly in that part of Asia which was anciently termed Proconsular Asia, or Lydia, and of which the principal city was Ephesus, where St. John spent the latter part of his days. But as to the extent of this sect, or the time when it became extinct, we have no certain information. Its existence should seem not to have been protracted beyond the second century. Isaac Beausobre indeed, in his *Dissert. sur les Nazareens*, which is to be found in the supplement to his *Historia Hussitica*, p. 144. has attempted from some words of the emperor Julian, apud Cyrillum, lib. vi. *contra Julian*, p. 333. to prove that the Cerinthians were not extinct even in the fourth century. But the fact is, that he did not sufficiently attend to what is said by Julian. What the emperor remarks is this, that there were certain of the Christians who taught that "the Word" of which St. John speaks, was distinct from Jesus Christ. These Christians Beausobre conceives to have been Cerinthians, but he is mistaken. For Cerinthus did not differ from the rest of the Christians in making a distinction between "the Word," or the divine nature, and the man Jesus Christ. All Christians do this; at least all who assent to the decrees of the Council of Nice. St. John himself clearly does so when he says that the Word was made flesh. John, i. 14. What distinguished Cerinthus from other Christians was his denying that the Word coalesced in one person with Jesus, and contending that the latter was thirty years of age when Christ descended on him, as also that upon the seizure of Jesus by the Jews, Christ withdrew from his person, and returned to the place from whence he had come. His opinion of Christ in this respect bears somewhat of a resemblance to that which is commonly attributed to Nestorius, dividing Christ Jesus into two distinct persons. His tenets, however, were by far worse than what the Nestorian maxims countenance, and we therefore cannot agree with Faydit, Lampius, and other learned men, who consider Cerinthus as having, in point of fact, been a Nestorian before the time of Nestorius.

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